



# ADBUSTERS

JOURNAL OF THE MENTAL ENVIRONMENT >> MAR/APR 2001 >> NO. 34

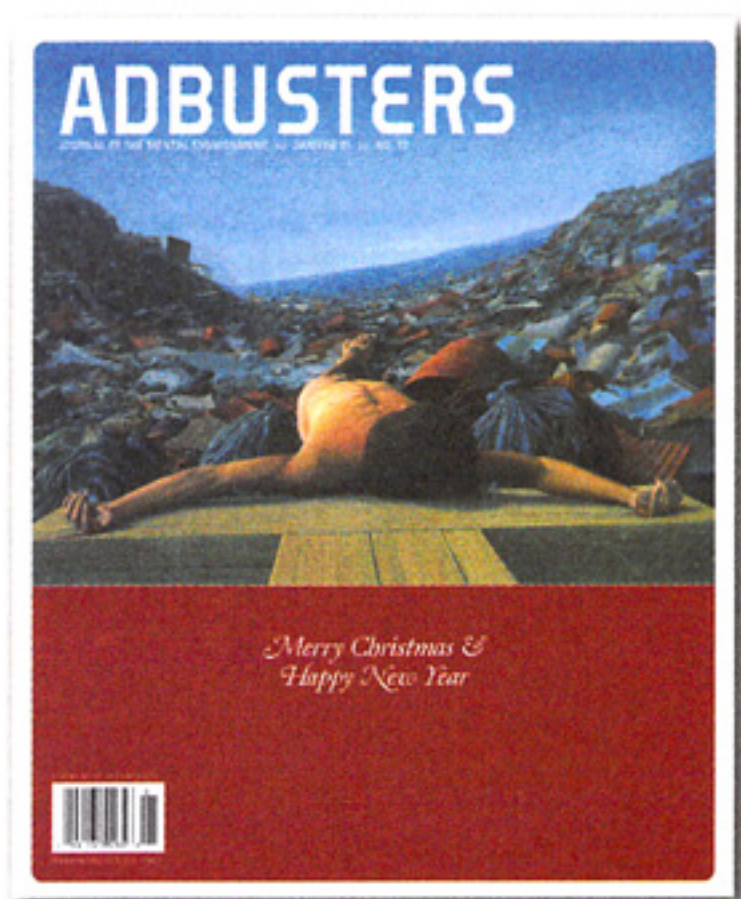
US/CAN \$5.95 UK £3.50 4/200



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## IS THE AMERICAN DREAM NEGOTIABLE?

The cover of *Adbusters* #33 misses the point of the Christian message. Our leader didn't say dominate and destroy the earth; he said nurture and care for it. Human selfishness has created pollution, both in the media and on the planet. Please don't blame us. We are with you in fighting both big business and big polluters.

Joel Blaylock  
Allen, Texas



## NO CONNECTION

I live in the suburbs of California. Life is disgusting here. I was so blown away by the picture of the fat-ass white guy and the African child that I photocopied 100 of them and taped them around my neighborhood.

Erin Hanley  
Dublin, California

Your oversimplified juxtaposition of the hungry and overweight bellies ["Is the American Dream Negotiable?" *Adbusters*

Seeing *Adbusters* on the shelf at Barnes & Noble was like bumping into my priest at a pornography store.

George W. Hardy  
Richmond, Virginia

#33] was indeed shocking if not effortless. Studies show the people in the US with the largest Body Mass Index are often also the poorest and least educated. This often dispossessed population is not the same population directing corporate gluttony.

Marta Induni  
Davis, California

Using the image of a fat person to depict a complex system of parasitic economic and political relationships is very offensive. Fat people, especially fat women, have been leaders in deconstructing consumer culture and exposing the multi-billion dollar diet and "beauty" industries. Body size is a result of a number of factors, including nature, nurture and choice. Fat people are not any more greedy or guilty of overconsumption than thin people are.

Sandra Russell  
Toronto, Ontario

Is fat phobia so acceptable in anti-consumerist politics? I was quite unimpressed by the "connection" drawn between fat folks and malnutrition in developing countries. As for your image of the Statue of Liberty as a fat chick — that seems like a great improvement to me.

Reena Katz  
Toronto, Ontario

To get at the root of the West's attitude about body and beauty: instead of a "fat"

body standing in contrast to the bloated, starving belly, we should see the 300 lbs. of a body builder.

Geoff Balme  
Raleigh, North Carolina

## CHAIN REACTION

I don't compliment you on quoting Fidel Castro in *Adbusters* #33. That the "revolutionary" leader can craft an eloquent indictment of our society is par for the course. It does not change the fact that educated and cultured people keep trying to swim to our consumer society.

We have great freedom of choice. That is why it is worth publishing your magazine. That is why none of you are swimming to Cuba.

Andrew Okun  
Los Angeles, California

Those who seek to leave Cuba are economic refugees. As their small island has been subjected to the longest and most stringent economic blockade of the 20th century by the world's most powerful nation, it is only surprising that it has managed to survive at all. When referring to suppressive governments, it should be noted that the US imprisons a higher proportion of its population than any other nation on earth, often for crimes associated with poverty.

Les MacDonald  
Balmain, Australia





**hate**



The Brazilian Catholic Church is not using a higher chance of a heavenly afterlife as a selling point for donations to its "stock" ["Holy Jammers!" *Adbusters* #33]. They are speaking to a desire that can be found in every person: the desire for justice. Jammers all over the world would be selling themselves short if they did not consider charities such as this a part of any revolution.

Bryan Moats  
Kailua-Kona, Hawaii

Gandhi vaccine will soon be available for treatment of the killer disease, affluenza. Possible side-effects include: raging episodes of peace and tranquility; a centered feeling; disinterest in global politics, subjugation and other important issues; appreciation of nature. The American Medical Association will not allow distribution in the US as it tends to interfere with the productive ability of even seasoned master machine oilers.

James R. Prall  
San Luis Obispo, California

I am angered by your parodies that portray people on anti-depressants as happy people that go on drugs as an easy solution. Not true. Every day I loathe taking my pill. Unfortunately, I was born with an imbalance of serotonin in my brain that makes me depressed. Too many people are on anti-depressants without a legitimate reason, but your parodies also mock people like me.

Becky Fonfara  
Sterling Heights, Michigan

A pill can only ever change something in our bodies — stop a chemical reaction here, create a hormone there, dull some pain. But our bodies are in fine tune with our mind and spirit. Those chemical reactions, hormones and pain have a purpose. We need to take the time to figure out what they mean. Only we have the power to evolve our mind and spirit. If taking some medication for a while is the only way we can accomplish this, then so be it. But I would say never rely on meds alone. We deserve much better.

Name withheld by request  
Vancouver, British Columbia

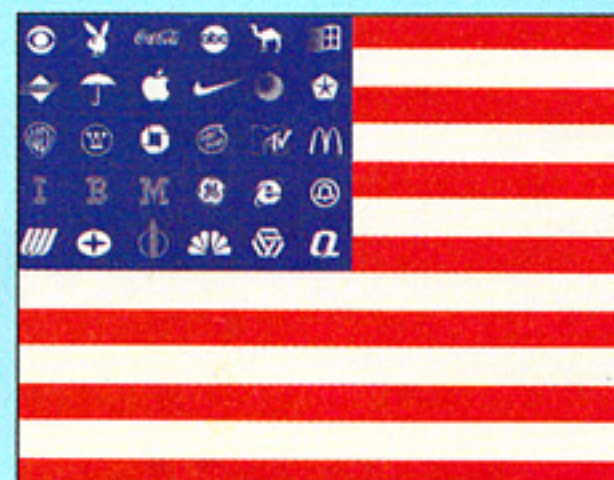
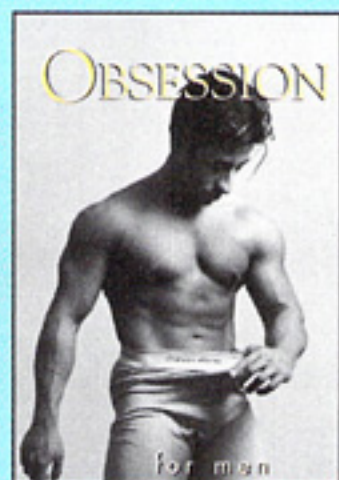
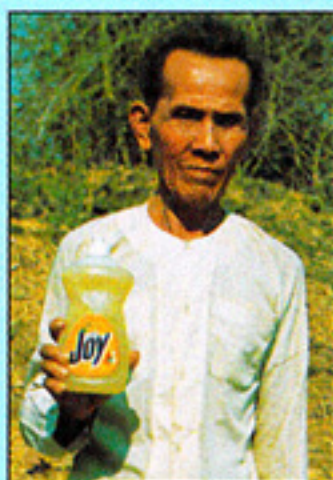
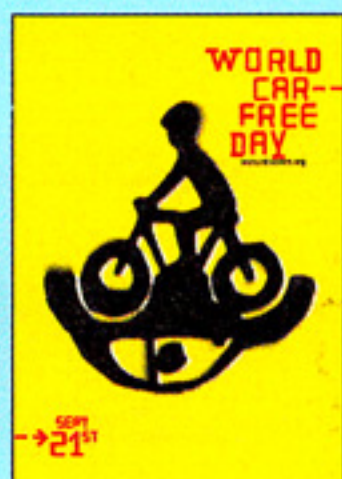
Your counter-capitalist perspective has had a profound impact on my purchasing behavior. Now I do what I can to keep my hard-earned money out of the hands of greedy retailers. For example, instead of allowing McNally Robinson to profit from the sale of your magazine, I now stand (or sit) by the magazine rack and read *Adbusters* from cover to cover, then put it back on the shelf.

Ken Hildebrand  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Did you know that there is a product that can be bought for \$5.95 that has its corporate name printed on it 96 times?! Amazing but true. I have one right here in my hands. What is it, you ask? It's *Adbusters* magazine! A little overkill, wouldn't you say?

Alan L. Brown  
Toronto, Ontario

After ten short years, the Internet has failed miserably to live up to its potential. Rather than being a tool for progress and transcendence, it is being co-opted to promote a frantic selling frenzy and one final



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Subscribe online at <[www.adbusters.org](http://www.adbusters.org)>, call 1-800-663-1243, or fill out the insert card on page 16.





control



gorging run of consumerism before the earth runs dry.

We are entering a black hole of advertising that will soon eat every square inch of visual space available. And when there's nothing left but advertising, and I finally think in nothing but advertised images, cyberspace will exactly equal the empty space between my ears.

Ranald Bruce  
Sonoma County, California



## TV TURNOFFS

I disagree with the notion that certain types of media desensitize youth to violence ["Killer Entertainment," *Adbusters* #32]. Media does not feature enough vulgarity. Obscenity is highly subjective — even foul language is only condemned on the basis of it belonging to the lower class vernacular. The answer to society's ills resides in less regulation, not more.

Douglas Rasmussen  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

TV does not insult or irritate me. I do not mind having my appetite whetted for meals that do not exist. I do not mind being the butt of an endless joke. I care not that the stick which is used to beat me eight hours a day is the same one from which the carats dangle. The sadist and the glutton can be truly happy. Compulsion can be gratifying; the pursuit of happiness is my right. People who care are suckers.

Benedict Warr  
Charleston, South Carolina

No like TV? Don't watch. No tell someone what to do. You don't like TV but devote

time and energy on it. Try whittling on the front porch and let the shavings pile by your feet. Is good zen-like thing. Better than prescription drugs, or street-bought drugs. I pray for you.

Fred L. Apides  
Orange, Connecticut

With regard to your *TV Turnoff Week* and *Buy Nothing Day*, why wait to celebrate them only once a year? Wouldn't all of us and the earth benefit if we took one day a week and just rested from consumerism? Are you aware that there are a few million people in this world that do just that?

Who are these strange people? Sabbath-keeping Christians!

Brad Dahr  
Port Coquitlam, British Columbia

## ALL THIS TALK OF ANARCHY

Anarchism is far older than your article ["All This Talk of Anarchy," *Adbusters* #32] mentions. Isaiah 59:13 talks of men speaking oppression and revolt. It is interesting that these two are given equivalence. The oppressor takes what is not his, and in the process destroys. The anarchist revolts and destroys, in the process taking what is not his. From what I have seen, both are equally bad, and both drive society in the same direction.

Name withheld by request  
Silute, Lithuania

Contrary to what Barry Stoller claims [Letters, *Adbusters* #33], anarchism has always been a strongly working-class movement opposed to capitalism, "free trade" agreements, and corporate control of the media.

It's noteworthy that the anarchists were at the front of the recent anti-free trade protests while the Leninists obeyed the police and remained non-confrontational? The Leninists use signs and banners that are printed with uniform text and march in rigid formation while the anarchists' protests are filled with colorful, home-made signs. What side would you be on?

Jamal Hannah  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

## Birdfoot's Grampa

The old man  
must have stopped our car  
two dozen times to climb out  
and gather into his hands  
the small toads blinded  
by our lights and leaping,  
live drops of rain.

The rain was falling,  
a mist about his white hair  
and I kept saying  
you can't save them all  
accept it, get back in  
we've got places to go.

But, the leathery hands full  
of wet brown life  
knee deep in summer  
roadside grasses,  
he just smiled and said  
they have places to go too.

— Joseph Bruchac





chaos



# ADBUSTERS

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**Senior Editor** James MacKinnon  
**Managing Editor** Dominique Ritter  
**Contributing Editor** Bruce Grierson

**Guest Art Director** Mike Simons  
**Art Associate** Paul Shoebridge  
**Designer** Valerie Thai  
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**Art Assistant** Krista Johnson  
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**Editors-at-Large** Charles Dobson, Douglas Rushkoff  
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**Marketing Consultant** Harvey McKinnon  
**Printing** Transcontinental Printing Inc.  
**Color/Prepress** Supreme Graphics  
**Accounting** Ken Lackner, Elmer Daum  
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## Thank you to:

The Foundation for Deep Ecology,  
 Weeden Foundation, The New Roadmap Foundation  
**and also to:** Justin Blacklock, d2.com, Taizo Kato,  
 Marie Lussier, Mia Macdonald, Lisa Pelzer,  
 Jeff Reifman, Richard Riel, Aaron Rolick,  
 Martin Rose, Theresa Sapergia, Donna Simons,  
 Terry Sunderland, Katie Waldo



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1243 West 7th Ave., Vancouver, BC, V6H 1B7, Canada •  
 Tel (604) 736-9401 • Fax (604) 737-6021 •  
 Email [adbusters@adbusters.org](mailto:adbusters@adbusters.org) • [www.adbusters.org](http://www.adbusters.org)

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## THE EXPERTS

I was appalled, and indeed shocked, at the covers of *Adbusters* #32. Observing the offending covers, both front and back, we see a guy with glasses, a bald guy, and two chubby broads.

Don't you understand that movies, TV, magazines, and advertising are supposed to use models, not show those from the inferior class? Models are model citizens because they have attractive faces, more muscles and larger breasts. In the USA we are used to seeing the Aryan class on display. An immediate explanation and apology are demanded.

*John Theissen*  
*Oakdale, Minnesota*

It strikes me as odd that in an article condemning society's reliance on professionals that replace community support, doctors are among the condemned and child-care workers are praised. Although some doctors may be overpaid, they still provide a necessary service that community members are unable to provide. However, if the community was strong and dependent on one another, there would be no need for child-care workers because the children would be looked after by the community.

*Jennifer Rycroft*  
*Whitby, Ontario*

## NEW WORLD ORDER

I am unclear as to how your group plans to "topple existing power structures and forge a major shift in the way we will live in the 21st century." I do not think that providing bad press about corporations will solve the problem. Corporations exist for the sole purpose of accumulating capital. They cannot have a conscience because it does not profit them to do so. Short of altering the current socioeconomic order, I believe we will be fighting a never-ending battle as companies devise more insidious ways of producing, selling, and accumulating capital.

*Ryan Frigault*  
*Fredericton, New Brunswick*

I think you are totally off base villainizing faceless corporations and portraying

them as sub-human robots bent on eternal world domination ["Corporate Crackdown," *Adbusters* #31]. The truth is, most corporations are merely small enterprises run by ordinary, law-abiding American citizens.

*Stephen Chan*  
*Rutgers University, New Jersey*

AOL's Steve Case recently said, "Our brands, services and technologies already touch hundreds of millions of people. We will embed the AOL Time Warner experience more deeply into their everyday lives." Apparently, this man has selflessly brought it upon himself to be "CEO" of our minds, souls and cultures.

*Justin Tribble*  
*Sedona, Arizona*

The new school that is being built in my town is to have a mall-style food court with a McDonald's, a Taco Bell and others. What ever happened to the good, old-fashioned lunch lady who would slop down some mystery meat on your tray and a carton of 2% milk? I was tolerant with the Coke machines but now they are privatizing our cafeterias. This has to stop before it is too late.

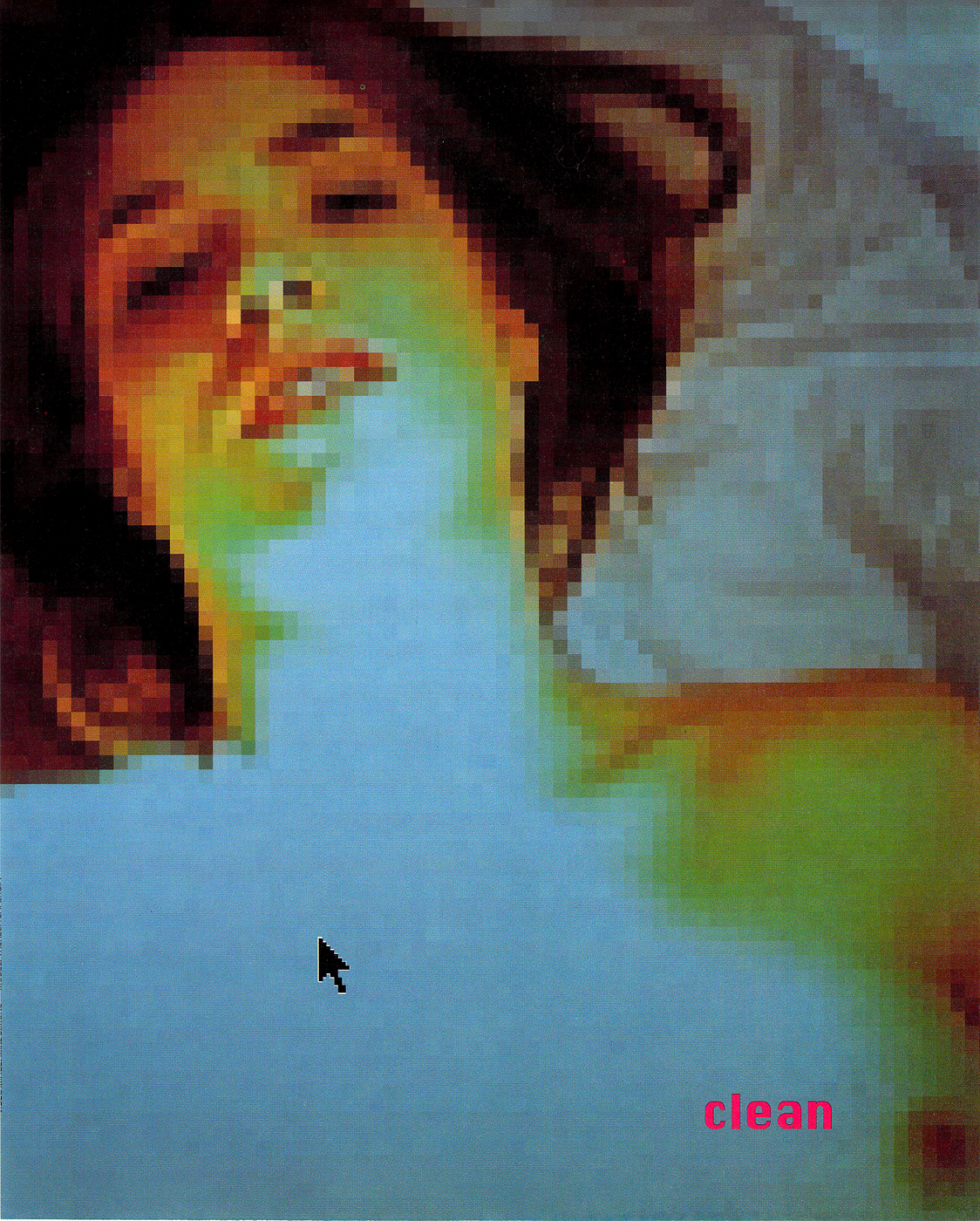
*Mark Little*  
*Barrie, Ontario*

My school is one of many to be held hostage by the Coca-Cola company. Last year the school board sold the students out by whoring themselves to this company — striking a deal to only sell Coke in the cafeteria in return for a new scoreboard. Research shows that individuals who regularly consume a product at an early age will continue to use and prefer that product for the rest of their lives. Coca-Cola is trying to hook us for life. I am starting a student movement in my high school to stop this.

*Will Ellis*  
*karnes7@flash.net*

This past weekend, I enjoyed watching many college football games. I did not, however, enjoy the full-frontal assault by advertisers who attached their names to





clean



every piece of equipment players and reporters used. The coup-de-grace occurred in the Orange Bowl — the black paint under the players' eyes was replaced by black stickers on which white print advertised one of their numerous sponsors.

Laura LoGerfo  
Ann Arbor, Michigan

## BOYCOTT PHILIP MORRIS?

I'm all for subvertisement. It makes sense that in this media-crazed world, we need voices — loud voices — screaming at the citizen-somnambulists that inhabit America to wake up and don't believe the hype! But castigating Lewis Lapham because he uses a tobacco company's money to keep a tremendously intelligent, literary and — dare I say it — liberal magazine somewhat close to mainstream America is counterproductive. What better place to put cigarette ads than in a magazine which has an intelligent, educated reader base who can make up their own minds about whether or not to ruin their health?

Mike Janowski  
Oak Park, Illinois

Lewis Lapham obviously has no moral scruples when he curries tobacco companies to pay him a great deal of money to place an ad that propagandizes addiction and slow death in his so-called intellectual magazine.

Jack Michon  
Los Angeles, California

People still have free choice to smoke. It is their responsibility to look after themselves.

a Midean  
Chalkidiki, Greece

in Bassell's essay should have been of "fiction." Escamaba is a wonderfully friendly town, full of honest, hard-working people. That a few thousand in our fair city is not lost to time, as Bassell seems to think. We are already famous for our candy, and Chicago Cubs or Kevin Tapan. Many celebrities here, so we are not in need of a company. However, we found all

homesteaders boy. You're one of us!  
J. Kona M. Williams  
Escamaba, Mich.

### Anxiety Attack

I rather than reading Dave Hickery's essay on the role of art in our society [A World Like Santa Barbara, Readings, September] that we in Santa Barbara occupy the same level of hell as teenage suburban killers. Our mutual sin, the desire to banish anxiety from the world.

But Hickery is wrong. We in Santa Barbara have as much anxiety as people anywhere, we just have better weather.  
Philip Koplin  
Santa Barbara, Calif.

### Correction

Gard E. Finney-Noblen's letter in the September issue ["Dry Mouth"] contained the claim that in Florida an average of 138 million gallons of water are used per capita per day. The figure should have been 1213 gallons. The mistake was made by Harper's, not by the writer. We regret the error.



### WHY ARE YOU BUYING YOUR FOOD FROM A TOBACCO COMPANY?

Did you know that every product pictured here is owned by Philip Morris, the world's largest tobacco corporation? Chances are you've been helping to promote Marlboro cigarettes without even knowing it. Now you can withdraw that support. Next time you go shopping, boycott these products. Keep your family's food budget out of Philip Morris' pockets.

International Campaign to Boycott Philip Morris Food Products. WWW.ADBUSTERS.ORG WWW.INFACT.ORG

HALF-PAGE AD IN HARPER'S, DECEMBER 2000. WILL LEWIS LAPHAM JOIN THE DEBATE? SEE <WWW.ADBUSTERS.ORG>

Do not try to destroy the economy of this country, or Canada's for that matter, with your personal "do-gooder" social judgments! Your anti-Philip Morris campaign is poppycock! It is not up to you to judge and lobby against a legal corporation and go after the corporation's charter to operate a business. That is a matter for the state governments and federal government of the USA. Butt out!

MacLeod Smith  
Cypress, Texas

I'm sick and tired of being a consumer whore. I'm tired of the television; the shows, the ads, telling me who to be, what to wear and how to act. I'm sick of being controlled by corporations. I'm sick of the Polo Jeans, the Starbucks coffee, the Coca-Cola and

McDonald's. I'm tired of it. I want to change, but I don't know how.

Jeremy Bakin  
Sunnyvale, California

We are divided by outdated and arbitrary borders. I'm tired of feeling like part of a minority in my own country but one of a like-minded billion worldwide.

It's not until we pull together that things dramatically change. It is logical, then, that we form a completely new country. We develop our own rules, elect our own spokespersons, nurture our own ideals. And do it all online.

Matthew Herbert  
Citizen 1 in Country A

Something is happening. The buzz is getting louder. It's a copy of *No Logo* that found its way onto the best-seller table in a Barnes & Noble bookstore. It's a back issue of *Adbusters* magazine discovered at the bottom of the magazine rack in the new Starbucks downtown. It's a copy of *The Society of the Spectacle* found in a box at a neighborhood garage sale. It's coming from several directions: from artistic retaliation, from classroom debates, from Internet publishers. If you can't hear it yet, just wait. Soon this buzz will be deafening.

Jesse Ladret  
Victoria, British Columbia

LETTERS: editor@adbusters.org fax: (604) 737-6021  
1243 West 7th Ave., Vancouver, BC, V6H 1B7, Canada  
Please include name, address & telephone number.

## ART CONTRIBUTORS – NO.34



Love Front Cover  
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Control/Chaos Photos  
Photos: Chris Gergley  
Model: Jeff Harris



Hate Photo  
Photo: Chris Gergley  
Model: Lisa Pelzer



Cyborg Manifesto  
Design, Illustration:  
Bill Texas  
Model: Taizo Kato  
Hand, Face Photos:  
Pat Hemingway



Great Escape Paintings  
Robert JeanRichard  
<rjr2000@home.com>



Clean/Dirty Photos  
Photos: Una Knox  
Models: Theresa Saper-  
gia, Mike Barker



Digital Icon Spreads  
Photos: Una Knox  
Illustrations: Bill Texas

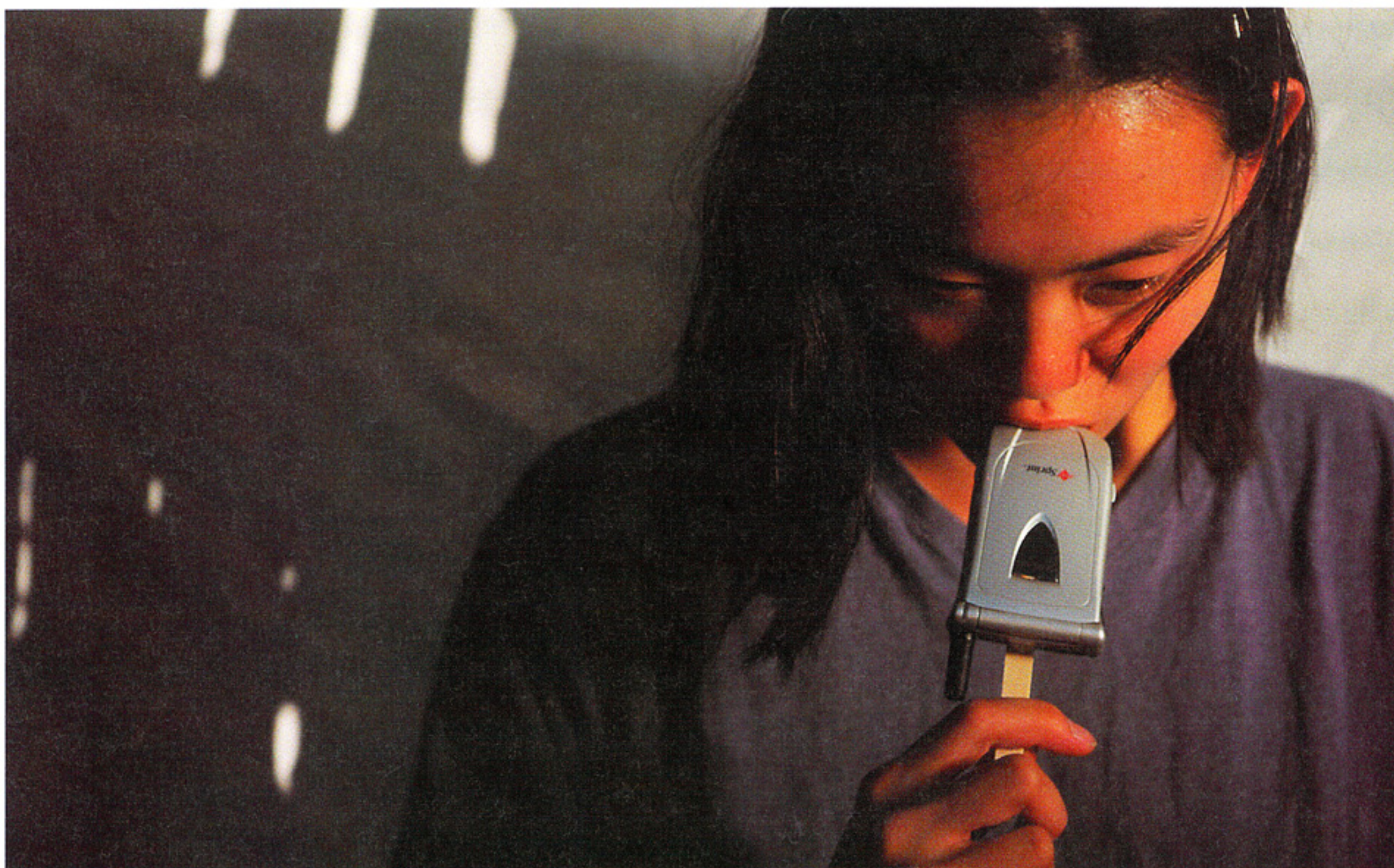




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dirty





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## A Chip In Your Shoulder

Everyone loves cyborg tech – until it's time to get wired

**T**rumpets and confetti have accompanied almost every cybernetics advance from sumo-wrestling robots to bionic arms for monkeys. News of the coming cyborg era has been with us for years, each step towards replaceable human parts or psychic interconnection cheered by futurists and the media. And then came a crucial final breakthrough, announced to the world with . . . *tah-tah-tah-tum!* . . . a paranoid hush.

Last fall, a company called DigitalAngel.net seemed poised to advance the fundamental cyborg technology: wired flesh. And then, suddenly, its breakthrough vanished.

In October, DigitalAngel publicly introduced its namesake technology, an implantable computer chip that reads your pulse, temperature and other life signs, calculates your location using the Global Positioning System, wirelessly communicates with ground stations and runs itself on energy drawn from your own body heat. Some benefits: put chips in children, and always know where they are — even if they're abducted. Put one in Granddad — if he has a heart attack while heli-skiing, the chip transmits an emergency beacon. Tracking criminals is a cinch. But by the time DigitalAngel's demo date arrived, the implantable chip had disappeared.

"And let me be very clear on one important point," emphasized CEO Richard Sullivan, predicting \$80 billion in revenue. "This potential marketplace I'm talking about is for an attachable

device, something worn on the outside, close to the skin. We're not planning on, or even considering, any other application at this time. Only external uses!"

What caused the about-face?

"It's a result of the analysis of the market," explains DigitalAngel's president and chief scientist, Dr. Peter Zhou. "And of people's reactions."

To wit: the likes of CNN, Fox and MSNBC had referred to DigitalAngel as a Big Brother "privacy nightmare;" civil rights groups had compared implants to the Nazi scheme of tattooing prisoners; Christians had likened them to the mark of the Beast. People's "fear factor," admits Zhou, influenced the company's decision to concentrate on the non-implant market "for a while."

Mark Addison of the technology marketing firm Rocket Science isn't surprised. Talk of a cyborg age may be ubiquitous, but most people, he says, still regard their bodies as sacred.

"In current culture, [implanting chips] would be perceived as drastic," says Addison. "It'd be a tough sell at the consumer level."

Deep, archetypal feelings are at work, says Jonathan Young, a psychologist with the Center for Story and Symbol in Santa Barbara, California. The lore of "orphan found" appeals to our sense of community, he says, but if you can always be found, you can also never escape. "That's the frightening aspect: never being able to get outside the frame," he says. "Being hunted like prey." >>



<< Already, though, tracking chips have been implanted in millions of pets, and are a new feature on some cell phones and other handhelds. IBM, British Telecom, Mitsubishi, MIT and countless others have been linked to human chip implant products in development.

Addison declares the DigitalAngel backlash a temporary setback — wired flesh won't be off-limits for long. More "socially acceptable" chip implants are already being tested, some to control epileptic seizures, others to improve hearing or help paralyzed people use their arms and legs. Advancements in "wireless area networks" (WANS) have hundreds of companies scrambling to develop refrigerators, locks, cars, cell phones, bank machines and other products that can communicate with each other and — conveniently — with you and your implant.

When wired flesh offers us that kind of world, says Addison, we're going to *want* to plug in. "As a society we're moving away from that sacred barrier," he argues, pointing to the way mainstream culture came to embrace body piercing. "It's not a big step from a stud in your tongue to a microchip in your forehead."

—Rob Wipond



Why is this man smiling? With his new five-year, \$100 million Nike contract, Mr. Woods is the richest Tiger mascot in history — way ahead of Kellogg's Tony and that chump from Esso.

## Bull Market In Your Genes

Pure, isolated bloodlines are the preferred stock of biotech investors

In October 2000, global culture quietly passed an important milestone: the point at which nothing — *nothing* — is safe from being slapped with a price tag. That month, Iceland sold the gene pool of its 276,000 citizens for a cool \$12 million.

Iceland was only the first country to realize what they had: a small, isolated population, perfect for research on genetic links to disease. With its new exclusive contract, DeCode Genetics will create and operate a database containing the health records and genetic information of the entire nation.

In November, the island nation of Tonga, in the South Pacific, followed suit. Tonga sold the rights to the genetic information of its 108,000 citizens to an Australian company, Autogen Ltd., for an undisclosed amount. Previously, Tonga's economy focused on fishing and tourism,

and relied heavily on foreign aid. The deal with Autogen is expected to create hundreds of jobs at a new research facility, while royalties from any pharmaceutical products developed will be paid to the Tongan government.

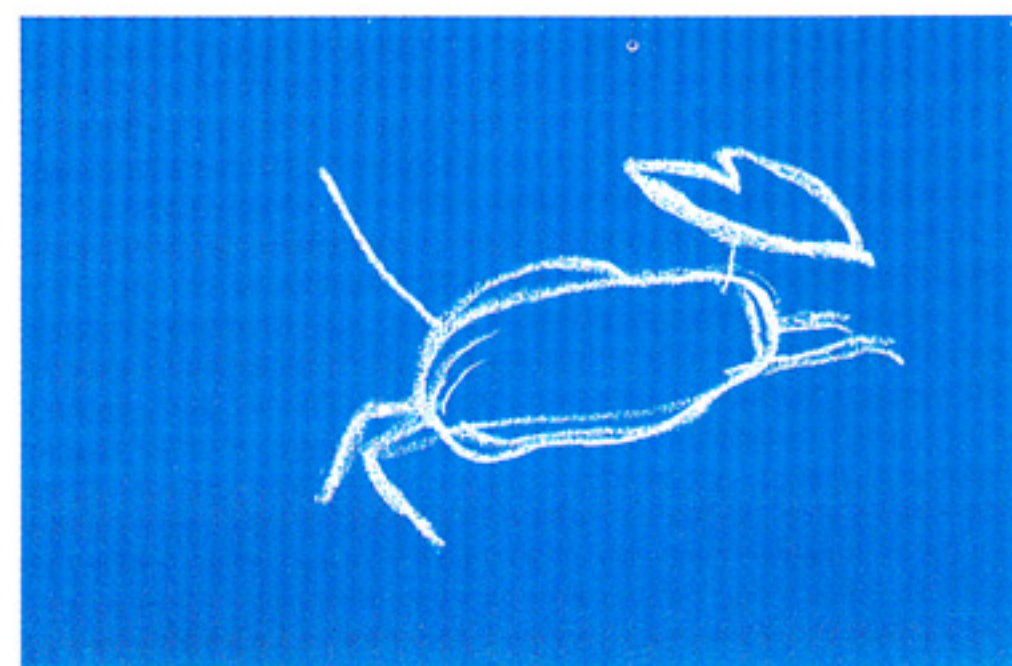
Now Estonia, a nation waiting in the wings of the European Union, has put access to its DNA donors up for sale. The government has passed legislation to form the Estonian Genome Foundation, and created a website to woo biotech investors. Their statement of purpose takes on the tone of a horse-seller-at-market — Look at this population! Much bigger than Iceland's! But not too big... the bloodlines are still pure enough for some quality research. Act now for the best possible deal...

All this is undoubtedly good for medical research, and will be a financial boon

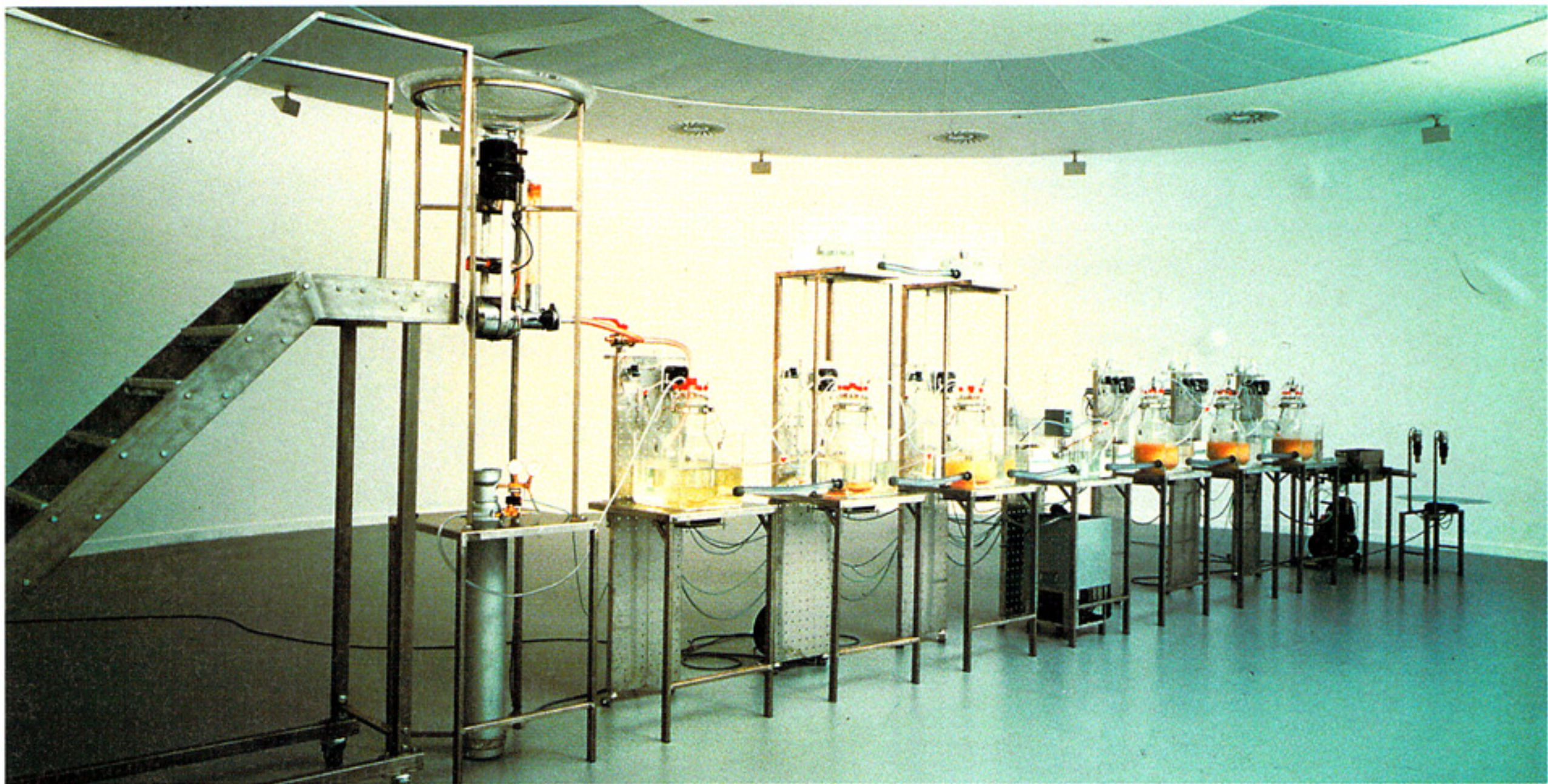
for some struggling nations. DeCode Genetics argues that its \$12 million should not be seen as payment, but as thanks to the gentle Icelanders for their cooperation. And at the launch party for the Estonian Genome Foundation, government officials, scientists, and businessmen clinked champagne glasses and toasted the marvels of the future.

But hopefully at least one little voice whispered in the corner: Is there anything left to sell?

— Eliza Strickland







The biggest Belgian starlet since Van Damme is a shit machine. *Cloaca*, a sculpture by Belgian artist Wim Delvoye, faithfully reproduces the human digestive process in six stages, from mouth to anus. It is currently on display at Antwerp's museum of contemporary art. Delvoye chose the name because, "to me it sounded like the

name of a new car: Toyota, Laguna, *Cloaca*." It also contains the same four letters that spell Coca-Cola, the only substance that *Cloaca* has trouble digesting. The museum is packaging *Cloaca* turds in a transparent resin and selling them for \$1,000 each. The machine can't keep up with demand. — Lee Greenberg

## They Came, They Merged, They Embedded Advertorial is born again

**Y**ou've seen it on the web: seemingly non-commercial copy that suddenly slips into ad-speak, complete with a product link — *et voilà!* Another buying opportunity. In another typical example, the Pop2It company specializes in small logo-links they call "Shoplets," as in, "generate incremental revenues by seamlessly embedding Shoplets without overly commercializing."

It used to be called "advertorial," and ethical publishers made sure it was clearly marked as advertisement. Today it's known as "embedded commerce," and you might never know that it's there. By any name, it has writers and reporters revisiting the foundation of their craft: the ideal of independence.

"Even though the commercial side and the writers aren't in the same room, if writers know the owners of their organization are watching sales generated by these links, it has a way of seeping unconsciously to the way they write," says Amy Mitchell, associate director of the Washington, DC-based Committee of Concerned Journalists.

"It's hard to be both an honest communicator of information about on-goings and a seller of them," Mitchell adds. "There needs to be a very distinct separation."

In the offline world, embedded commerce is rapidly moving beyond the familiar product placement in your favorite sit-com. Last summer, the Warner Bros. network debuted a pilot of *Young Americans*, a *Dawson's Creek* spinoff with Coca-Cola as the sole sponsor. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the ABC talk show *The View* took an even deeper plunge. In a November 2000 agreement

affecting eight shows, producers assured the Campbell's Soup Co. that hosts — led by veteran news anchor Barbara Walters — would "try to weave a soup message into their regular on-air banter."

Next up? "Smart television," which will allow viewers more chances to interact with the programs they watch — and let programmers interact right back. "Advertisers will target individuals based on the viewing data collected by smarter TV devices," note analysts at Forrester Research.

But even smart TV is only a crossover trend from "magalogs" such as MXG, a catalog-in-magazine's-clothing which targeted teenage girls, beginning in 1998. The mail-order marketer launched its website and magazine simultaneously, hoping to hit teens with a cross-media "interactive magazine." This time, at least, the convergence failed: both the magazine and website have since turned turtle.

Dan Janal, author of *Dan Janal's Guide to Marketing on the Internet*, reminds readers and viewers that sales journalism isn't unique to the New Economy. Technology has simply taught a greedy old dog a few new tricks. The question now is whether the advertorial line will keep being redrawn until every reading experience is a buying experience, every online destination also a point-of-purchase.

"The breakdown doesn't start with the advertisers," says Janal. "It starts with magazine publishers, in TV producers' drawing rooms."

— Katie Haegele



## Fox Guilty of Playing Chicken

Network fired reporters who refused to water down the bad news about Monsanto

**"T**here is no law, rule or regulation against slanting the news." When a major news media company makes this argument in court, that sounds like, well, *news*. So when Rupert Murdoch's Fox network did exactly that, why did the case fail to make page one and prime time?

On August 18, 2000, the "no rules" argument — in fact, the whole of Fox's case — collapsed. A jury found that Fox station WTVT in Tampa, Florida, had wrongfully fired reporter Jane Akre after she refused to modify an investigative story in ways she felt would result in "a false, distorted, or slanted news report." Damages were set at \$425,000, though appeals by Fox could delay the payment for more than two years.

The jury's decision marked the end of a three-year struggle that began after Akre and her husband, Steve Wilson, wrapped up a series of features that revealed the widespread use of synthetic bovine growth hormone (BGH) in Florida dairies. With promotional ads for the veteran reporters' work already airing, WTVT received a warning from lawyers representing Monsanto — the biotech giant that markets BGH under the brand name Posilac. Eighty-three rewrites and a suspension later, the story was canned and the reporters sacked.



"What is so unusual and egregious about our case is that this is the first time I know of that a newspaper or broadcaster has opted not to kill a story but to distort and mold the story into a shape that the potential litigant and advertiser — in this case Monsanto — would like," Steve Wilson told *Adbusters* in 1998. (No damages were found for Wilson, who acted as his own attorney; he will appeal the decision.)

Akre's victory marks the first time that a journalist in the US has used whistleblower legislation, which protects employees who refuse to break the law on the job, against a media organization accused of illegally distorting the news. It's a landmark case, raising red flags about the corporate culture of the media giants. So why won't the mainstream media pay attention?

According to Akre, reporters see the case as "too inside baseball" — media code for the unwritten rule that news organizations avoid writing about themselves or the industry. It's the crux of the crisis in the Fourth Estate: no one is watching the watchdogs.

*For further background, including the altered story script, with comment from Akre and Wilson, see <[www.foxBGHsuit.com](http://www.foxBGHsuit.com)>.*

## The Trouble With Normal A Canadian daily launches a fossil-fuel greenwash

**F**orty pages of soft reporting wrapping a gallery of ads where oil, gas and coal producers lay claim to environmental bragging rights. Sounds like a classic greenwash: industries with a PR problem buying some rose-colored space in the nation's presses.

But hold on a minute. This isn't some corporate conspiracy — just workaday business in the Canadian news media.

"We initiated it," said Ed Huculak, advertising director for the *Calgary Sun*, "because Calgary is the second biggest head-office capital in Canada and kind of the center for the oil gurus."

And the November 2000 print date: timed to appear just ahead of global warming treaty talks at The Hague? "Absolutely," said Huculak. "Our editorial team and our advertising team do work together quite closely in terms of trying to correlate the product."

The *Sun's* sustainable energy "special supplement" reached readers in Canada's fossil fuel capitals — Calgary and

Edmonton, Alberta — as well as nationwide through the *Globe and Mail* newspaper. Readers could enjoy stories like "A flare for improvement" (on flare gas burning), and "Giving Ma Nature a helping hand" (on oilsands reclamation), alongside articles on traditional sustainable energy stalwarts such as wind power and straw-bale houses. The tone is unmistakably upbeat, despite reported figures showing the fossil fuel sector produces 35 percent of Canada's greenhouse gases.

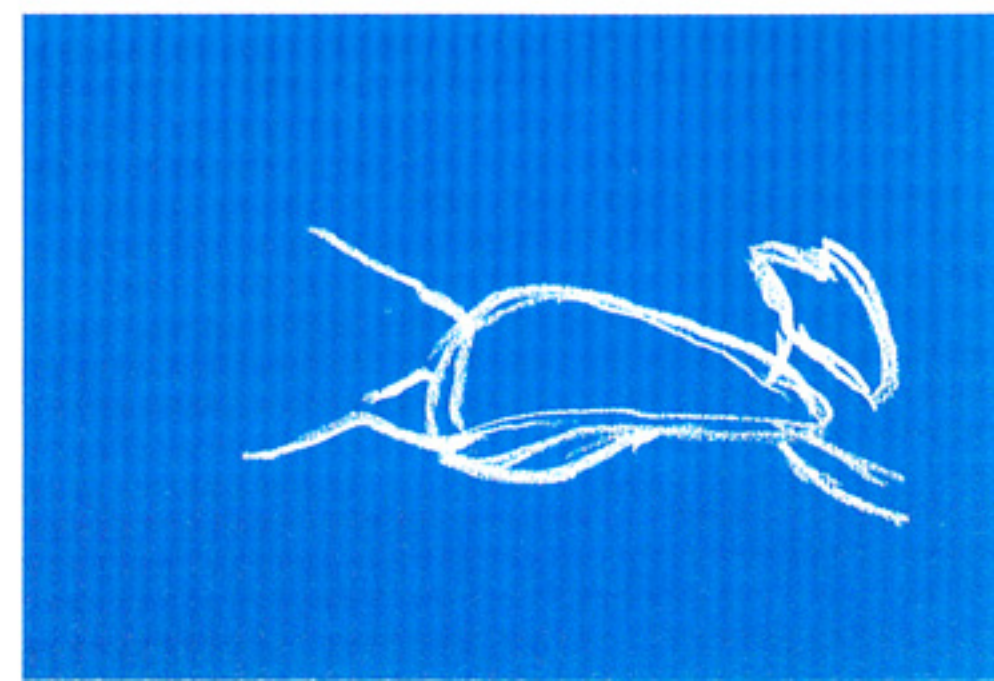
"Anybody can be negative," said Huculak. "The spin on these was to show the positive approach that these companies are going through. If we were to slam-dunk everything they were doing, then obviously there wouldn't be much response from them to tailgate with us."

Far from a pure marketing exercise, the supplement was the 1997 brainchild of *Sun* editor-in-chief Chris Nelson, who launched the concept just ahead of the original climate change treaty talks in Kyoto, Japan.

"It started as a strict editorial piece as to what the industry itself was doing voluntarily," says Nelson, who notes that Canada's energy sector is resisting federal regulation. The current supplement is not "advertorial," he argues, because the writers report freely within the assigned theme: the positive environmental efforts of energy corporations. "The subject is narrow, so it limits itself," he said.

Is the supplement a success? Industry advertisers keep coming back for more, says Huculak. And readers, it seems, see only business-as-usual. "I didn't receive any particular concerns," said Nelson.

—James MacKinnon





# Cybernetic Wal-Mart

Will Internet tax breaks kill Main Street, USA?

By 2003, annual online sales in the United States are projected to soar above \$1.4 trillion, and a politically loaded question is now unavoidable: do we tax online shopping? Already, the US Congress has resolved — 423 to 1 — that there should be a worldwide ban against levying special or discriminatory taxes on electronic commerce. The next step, according to such powerful figures as Senator John McCain and house majority leader Dick Armey, is to permanently exempt e-commerce even from *existing* sales taxes.

Thus far, the debate encompasses the perspectives of public servants, businesses, and consumers. But how about that of citizens? What would tax-free e-commerce mean for democracy and civic life? Very possibly it could mean the same thing the proliferation of Wal-Marts and megamalls has meant for Main Streets: a demise that no one intended.

Suppose a Wal-Mart store locates on the outskirts of a town, and half the residents start to do one-third of their shopping there. That means they do two-thirds of their shopping downtown, while the other half of the population continues to do all its shopping downtown. Although all the residents still patronize Main Street, downtown retail revenue drops about 16.7 percent — enough to start killing off shops.

It's a perverse market dynamic: a loss to the entire community that not a single person wanted. It is also self-reinforcing; once the downtown starts to shut down, people who preferred to shop there have no choice but to switch to Wal-Mart.

Systems theorists explain this kind of unwelcome, coercive and extreme outcome as the result of a "positive feedback loop." That is, the output of a process (some residents opting to shop Wal-Mart on occasion) feeds back into the original process as input (a smaller, less diversified local economy), generating more output (more people compelled to patronize Wal-Mart). In other words, a little generates more, more generates a *lot* more. Systems with positive feedback loops can easily burst limits.

To social scientists this is a "collective action problem:" an example of reasonable individual actions that together add up to a socially irrational outcome. As more commerce goes online, an emerging Cybernetic Wal-Mart Effect threatens to aggravate this dynamic. It works just like the regular Wal-Mart Effect, except more powerfully and pervasively.

Brick-and-mortar Wal-Marts mainly threaten mom-and-pop retail shops. But online commerce pits local businesses not just against a mall on the outskirts of town, but against the entire global marketplace. The Internet is spreading into every sector of the economy, from local manufacturers and suppliers to service providers such as travel agents, lawyers, and stockbrokers. A few of them may thrive by going online themselves, but they are the exceptions. In general, the economies of scale involved in enticing a viable customer base to a website will overwhelmingly favor a few deep-pocketed, very un-local enterprises.

If we think of ourselves solely as consumers, this isn't necessarily a problem. While local economies wither, the Net

should enable consumers to enjoy access to a wider range of goods and services, in some cases at lower cost. The catch is that we're not simply consumers. We're also family members, friends, local community members, and workers. From the standpoint of democratic society, above all we are citizens.

As consumers, we always ask, "Is this the best deal for me?" But as citizens we must ask, "Does a Cybernetic Wal-Mart Effect serve

## What does tax-free e-commerce mean for democracy and civic life?

the common good? Does it further our fundamental interest in preserving and improving the character of our democracy?"

From a democratic citizen's perspective, e-commerce with its coercive Cybernetic Wal-Mart Effect is problematic. My online shopping contributes to shrinking the local economy. Eviscerating a local economy weakens local cultural and community vibrancy. That's bad in its own right, but worse for democracy. As social bonds weaken, people relinquish mutual understanding and the capacity for collective action. Those are essential conditions for a workable democracy.

At the same time, undercutting local economies increases local dependence on national and global market forces and on decisions made in faraway corporate headquarters — powers over which communities have little or no control. As the locus of political intervention shifts to distant centers, the influence of everyday citizens declines.

A refusal to tax e-commerce amounts to a public sanction of this anti-democratic shift. But there's a simple way to maintain a healthy balance between e-commerce and local business, between sometimes perverse market forces and the social good. First, tax online and mail-order catalog sales. Second, grant some of the revenue back to municipalities to invest in their local economies and community life (e.g., sidewalk benches, parks, playgrounds, public toilets, public music and theater, local meeting halls, and so on). If necessary, another portion of the revenue could be rebated to low-income citizens.

Our judgments as citizens need to consider but also transcend our narrower interests as consumers. When it comes to public policy and the common good, our citizen-selves ought to be sovereign over our consumer-selves. And so the unavoidable question changes: If our consumer-selves say "yes" to sheltering e-commerce from taxes and shrug at the Cybernetic Wal-Mart Effect, are our citizen-selves prepared to live with the consequences?

*Richard Sclove is founder of the Loka Institute <www.Loka.org> and the author of Democracy and Technology (Guilford Press). This essay originally appeared in The Christian Science Monitor.*



## THE M.E.\* INDEX

\*Mental Environment



Fully animated video ads appear on Boston taxis. Ad downloads are planned for "blank" computer discs. Ads debut on hubcaps in Singapore, remaining upright even when in motion. Ads appear that can be read from a passing bullet train going 300 km/h. Is the Index shaken by the total saturation? Hardly. On the ad-creep front, nothing's shocking...

... Until we hit the bit about marketing to the 260 million Indian citizens who live largely outside the reach of mass media. One hot new way to reach this latest target market? Ads painted onto the horns of cattle. The Index runs, but it cannot hide.

Branding sports is no longer enough for Corporate America — one company now owns a sport all its own. Created by the Hope-Beckham PR agency, "Pepsi Ball" is billed as "a cross between ultimate (frisbee), team handball, basketball and a little lacrosse," played on a triangular field. But the best way to know if it's Pepsi Ball you're watching? The pros are juiced on free Pepsi, instead of getting snowed for coke. The Index gets shirty, draws a penalty.

But then, corporate hacks aren't the only people who can invent new sports. Take "big game SUV hunting." The goal: "tag" gas-guzzling SUVs with bumper stickers reading, "I'm Changing The Climate! Ask Me How." The rules: tag only in affluent suburbs; no commercial vehicles; go for the biggest and newest models. The inventors are Bay-area activists Robert Lind and Charles Dine, whose site <changingthecclimate.com> talks about global warming, explains how to remove unwanted bumper stickers and — best of all — lets taggers and taggees exchange barbs online. The mad taggers compare their sport to such all-American games as dumping tea in Boston harbor: "A non-violent protest of the policies of a few, affecting the many, with injurious results." The Index changes its spark plugs, roars to life.

MP3.com posts the CD *Absolute Silence*, which features not a single sound. Claiming inspiration from the likes of John Cage, Yoko Ono, and Masters of Zen, composer David M. Savage says he's producing the original roots music. "Tired of all the noise? When it's your turn on the CD player, give your ears a rest. Demand *Absolute Silence*!" As of mid-January, Savage had earned just 46 cents from MP3 — but the Index always appreciates the sound between the notes.

— James MacKinnon

## A Happy Spin on Doom

Video game critic weathers superflack attack

Thumbing through the December 2000 issue of the media magazine *Brill's Content*, Dave Grossman must have felt like Mark Twain reading his obituary in the newspaper.

A story in *Brill's* checked in on the video game industry a year and a half after the Columbine shootings turned violent-game manufacturers into global pariahs. The conclusion: the industry has magically rehabilitated its public image, thanks mainly to the spin work of uber-lobbyist Doug Lowenstein. Lowenstein has directed a massive campaign to paint the industry as responsible regulators of its products, and to discredit its most effective critic, the retired army psychologist Grossman. "The effect of the campaign was unmistakable," wrote Mark Boas in *Brill's*. "By May 2000 ... the press was running positive stories about the industry. And Grossman had all but vanished from the media landscape."

That's partly true. Leveraging his old journalistic connections — he used to be a Washington correspondent for Cox newspapers — Lowenstein has managed to get the Fourth Estate largely to buy the industry line (that there really is no connection between violent games and real-world violence). But if the perception is that the industry has squirmed free and melted into the night, that Doom will soon be bundled with every laptop, the reality is quite different.

"Look at what's happened to the industry

since Littleton," says Grossman by telephone from Jonesboro, Arkansas, on a rare night home from the lecture circuit. "They've lost in federal court, the major retailers are treating their product like you would guns or alcohol [that is, either refusing to sell to minors or 'carding' minors who do buy]. They've lost on the scholarly evidence, the regulations, the voluntary operations — it's just been a great year. Of course, the greatest achievement is to be declared public enemy number one and subject of their vilification campaign."

"What you've got here is a lobbyist who is lying," Grossman continues. "This guy [Lowenstein] is about as invested in the truth as the tobacco industry was with their product. So now the case [to ban the sale of violent games to minors] sits in federal circuit court. Inside the next couple of years we expect a major Supreme Court decision, and the odds are very good that the courts will essentially strip violent games of any pretense of First Amendment protection."

"In the long haul, these guys are going down, because truth eventually filters out. If the American Medical Association tells you that violent video games are dangerous, and the video game lobbyists deny it, who are you going to believe?"

— Bruce Grierson

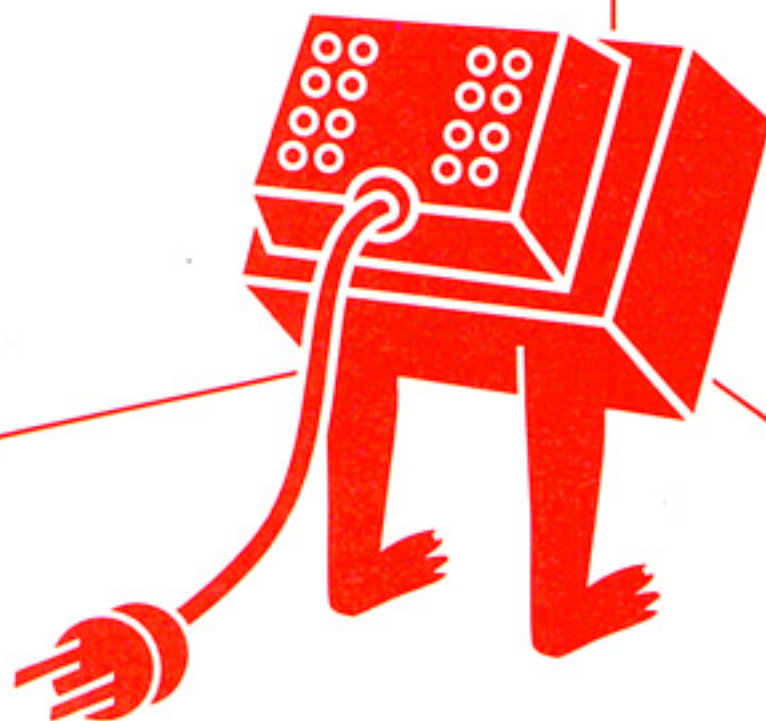




**Without**

A black and white photograph of a person's legs in jeans, with a large red spiral graphic overlaid. The spiral contains the text "tv alive without tv alive without tv alive without tv" repeated multiple times.

tv turn off week april 22-april 28 2001





## Linux, TiVo, Napster... Information wants to be free. You got a problem with that?

**Q**uick: What twilight-of-the-20th century development struck true fear into the hearts of the transnational bosses? The Y2K bug? Nope. The Seattle riots? Hardly. A tree-hugging Democrat gunning for the presidency? Please.

The answer is something that might be called the "information lib" movement — with its golden promise of freeing the indentured consumer.

Three cowboys led this particular party into Dodge: the open source paradigm, the file-sharing paradigm, and the custom-broadcast paradigm. You can call them Linux, Napster and TiVo.

All three have a kind of spread-the-wealth meme going. They're about returning power to individuals at the expense of the industry behemoths. Napster sticks it to recording companies, Linux sticks it to proprietary software companies, and TiVo sticks it to every broadcast advertiser who ever interrupted the narrative of your TV show with the competing narrative of lightning acceleration or crystal-clean dishware.

Arriving more or less together on the scene, the three heralded something genuinely revolutionary. Something almost purely democratic. Something essentially non-commercial, driven not by price but by value. At long last, the people — could it be true? — would have control of what they wanted to hear and see, would have access to the tools they needed to do their jobs. Information would be a common property-resource. And art wouldn't belong to those who made it, but to those who need it.

Radicals envisioned the end of mass-marketing, even the seeds of the destruction of capitalism itself. John Perry Barlow — who

once predicted the end of intellectual property — was suddenly looking like Nostradamus.

There were skeptics, naturally. They claimed info lib was never going to be allowed to take hold, because there was simply too much at stake for America, Inc. Further, it was a doomed model in a capitalist economy, an engine trying to run on air. And anyway, it couldn't rightly claim the moral high-ground, for what has made Napster and Linux and TiVo so popular is not sunny, communitarian idealism, but plain self-interest.

On one level, the doubters have been proven right — at least about that first part.

Within the last year, Napster and MP3.com have both settled lawsuits and struck deals with entertainment conglomerates (which means, at the very least, these services will soon be clogged with ads). The Linux companies still trying to offer totally free software are sinking like stones on the Nasdaq. And that maverick, TiVo, has signed on with Disney and General Motors.

The three cowboys have been knocked from their saddles. But for how long?

The thing about a real revolution is, short-term setbacks only delay it. They may divert it. But they do not stop it. There's plenty of room to debate the practical ethics of Napster (i.e. who gets hurt), and the feasibility of TiVo and Linux. But the kernels of these paradigms are potent enough to withstand shocks. They are romantic movements, bound up, at heart, in questions of value and justice and soul. And they are pushing forward what has become *the* debate of the information age. — *Harry Flood*

## Drug Companies Double-Dip

**I**f you're beginning to fear it's only marketing that distinguishes products these days, a recent trend emerging from the world of pharmaceuticals will do nothing to dispel those thoughts. Drug makers are realizing it's much easier to give an old drug a makeover than to go to the trouble of designing a new one. So some companies are taking tried-and-true medications, scoring a new indication from the regulator (i.e., getting it to approve a drug for a new conditions), renaming the product, and then booting it onto the marketplace in bright new packaging for the gullible hordes.

Eli Lilly, seeing the end to patent protection for its darling Prozac, recently took the generic chemical fluoxetine and dressed up the old girl in a pretty pink-and-lavender capsule. The "new" pill is touted as the first drug ever designed to treat the newly named affliction PMDD, or Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder.

Over at Merck, they've rolled out

Proscar and Propecia. These two new drugs are the same thing — finasteride. The only difference is the size of the dose (Propecia is one-fifth the dose of Proscar, but two-thirds the price) — and the spin. Proscar, we're told, tackles "urinary retention problems" by shrinking the prostate. Propecia stops your hair from falling out.

The folks at Glaxo Wellcome are doing creative things with bupropion. Under the name Wellbutrin, it's sold as an anti-depressant. But Wellbutrin is chemically identical to Zyban, one of the top-selling smoking cessation drugs. (Both Zyban and Wellbutrin are made from a chemical with a somewhat checkered past. Introduced onto the US market in 1985, for use as an anti-depressant, bupropion was yanked a year later because of an unacceptably high rate of seizures then relaunched in a smaller dosage form.)

And you wondered why those pharmaceutical stocks have been performing like champions. — *Basil Smallwood*

### YOU KNOW?

"I just told this to a young director who would like to be considered for the next *Batman* movie, and he asked me what my advice was and I said, 'Listen, I think you're a brilliant young director and I think you'll do a great job, but making the movie is not the job. The job will be feeding, you know, the kitty. And the kitty is a very big kitty. You're supporting Warner Bros. stores, all of the licensees, all of the ancillary rights, Wal-Mart, Kmart, the fast-food franchises, Kenner Toys, Sega games, Acclaim. There are thousands and thousands of items that are made with the Batman logo on them. DC Comics you're helping to support, and you're feeding that enormous machine. And that is really what the job is, and everyone has very, very, very high expectations.'"

— *Joel Schumacher, scriptwriter and director, on Fresh Air, National Public Radio*





## IT'S AN IUMA!



Iuma Devi  
Born: 08-31-2000  
6th winner



Iuma Thornhill  
Born: 08-11-2000  
1st winner



Iuma Hebert  
Born: 10-06-2000  
10th winner



Iuma Farish  
Born: 09-13-2000  
5th winner



Iuma Godfrey  
Born: 09-21-2000  
7th winner

### Branded for life

Why, you may ask, do these babies all have the same strange name? Meet five of the ten "winners" of the Internet Underground Music Archive's "Name Your Baby IUMA" contest. The arrival of these bouncing bundles brought their moms and dads great joy — along with \$5,000 each in prize money. Says IUMA founder and director Jeff Patterson: "We're proud to bring open-minded people the opportunity to name their children after a website that stands for new and creative expression." In this case, "creative expression" does not include choosing a name for your offspring.

## Got Game?

Hyperactive kids: let the healing begin with PlayStation



**M**edical and NASA researchers teamed up for a recent experiment: tweaking PlayStation games so they would provide biofeedback to hyperactive kids. Kids playing the games, then, would be led to a more "optimal" brain wave frequency. At least for some kids, increased attention is the result.

Does this help prove that children with attention deficit disorder are suffering from a biological disease? Probably not. Like the drug Ritalin and other techie quick fixes, biofeedback attempts to deal with a problem regardless of its ultimate cause. A study conducted 30 years ago by psychiatrist Mary Coleman reveals the problem.

When Coleman compared the levels of the biochemical serotonin in hyperactive and "normal" kids, she found differences so great that the two groups could almost be diagnosed by these serotonin levels alone. She then took the two most problematic kids and kept them at the research center for a few extra weeks. With no further treatment or intervention, the children's behavior changed dramatically. Not only did their hyperactivity go down and their attention go up, their serotonin levels returned to normal. A month after these kids returned to their everyday lives, however, all their problems had returned full-blown.

Like the serotonin explanation, the PlayStation fix pays no attention to the social and structural factors in a child's life that encourage hyperactivity and attention deficits in the first place. And when you consider that the world's "slow," unplugged cultures — largely lacking PlayStation access — are almost completely devoid of hyperactive children, it seems unlikely that PlayStation biofeedback will be the cure that we've been looking for. But then again, today's cybernetic child doesn't need curing, does he? He only needs a better fix. Thank goodness PlayStation 2 is in stores now.

— Richard DeGrandpre

## WATCH OR GO TO JAIL

**W**hen Ohio teenagers DJ and Carlotta Maurer walked out of their classrooms in October to protest the compulsory viewing of Channel One, a television program with commercials which is shown in schools across America, school officials realized they had a couple of dangerous radicals on their hands. Principal Patrick Calvin invoked the truancy provision of the school's code of student conduct, and 13-year-old DJ and 14-year-old Carlotta were whisked away to the Wood County Juvenile Detention Center, where they had all day to consider their crime.

Since then, Commercial Alert and Obligation, Inc., two national anti-media groups, have taken up the Maurers' cause. The

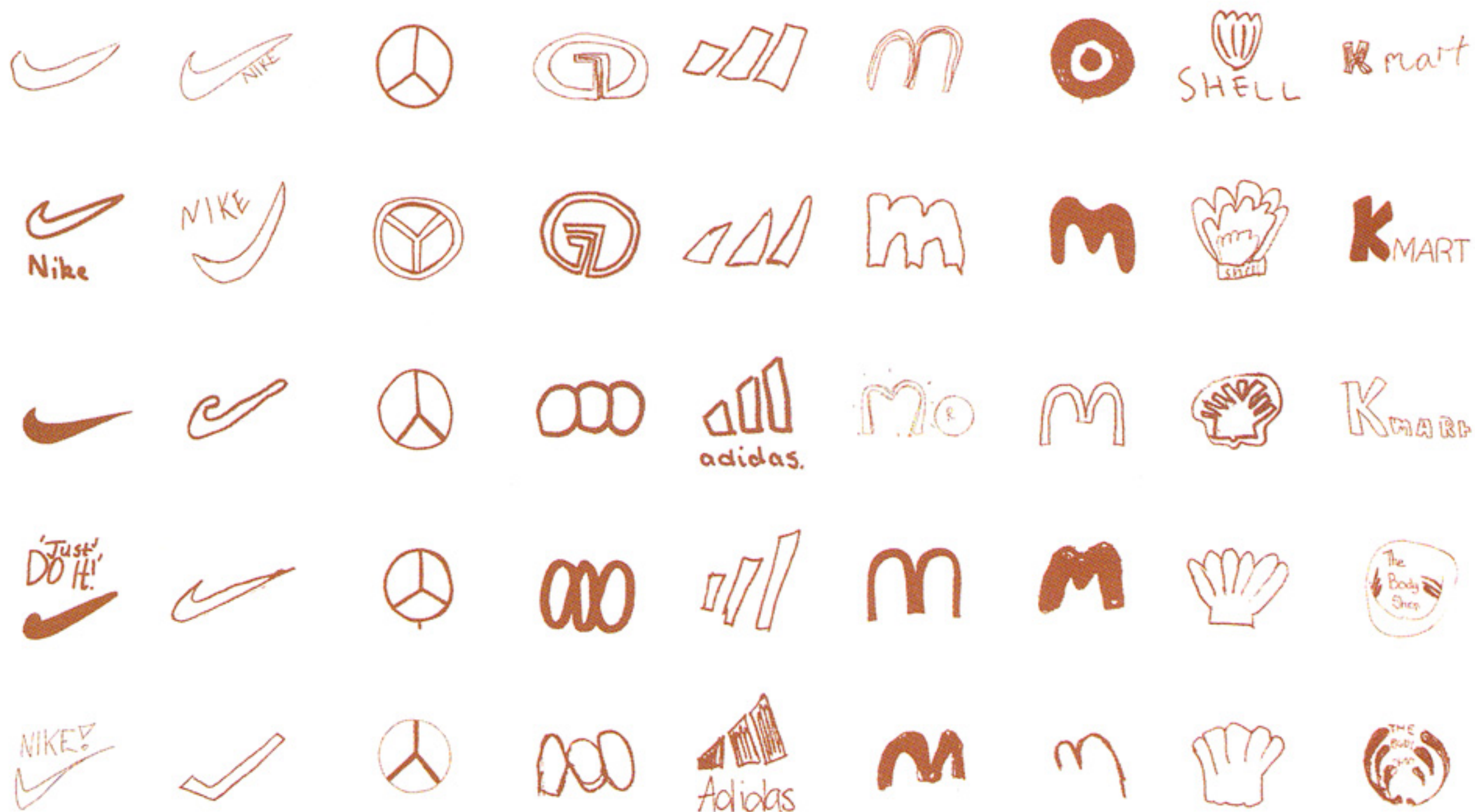
groups wrote to Ohio Governor Bob Taft, urging him to remove Channel One from all public schools.

"When the government sends children to a juvenile detention center because they don't want to watch advertising, that is both Orwellian and more than a little sick," reads the letter. "The public schools ought to be a sanctuary from the noxious aspects of commercial culture."

The governor has not responded to the letter. But the school is in negotiation with the Maurers, who have religious objections to television. It seems a day in the lockup didn't cool their heels enough to keep them from kicking.

— Eliza Strickland





Branding is about authority, not recognition, say the members of Letterbox, an Australian design group. When they asked schoolchildren to draw the first logo that came to mind, the kids brought a human touch to the world's most rigid art form — the creation of corporate identity.

## Schoolyard Scrap Classroom advertisers lose one in the US, hope for a Canadian savior

For the first time since he bought stock in the company, John Furr sees good times ahead for SKG Interactive. The trouble, he says, is that the improved business plan gives a new lease on life to commercial TV in Canadian schools.

In the past year, Furr watched as struggling SKG Interactive bought first into SRB International, a company that develops computer systems for school boards, and then into Athena Educational Partners, which brings its sponsored Youth News Network into classrooms.

"If they roll it all into one, they've got a strong leverage tactic," says Furr — schools could be pressured to accept SRB and YNN together, or not at all.

The company is set to make some kind of link, though the fine print is far from settled. "We will incorporate the Athena projects into the SRB educational application, thereby giving SKG an incredible opportunity to enter classrooms across

Canada," said Paul Romanchuk, CEO of SKG, in a November 2000 press release.

"We've got very significant concerns about that," responds Marilies Rettig, president of the 240,000-member Canadian Teachers' Federation. She notes that YNN has no firm foothold in Ontario, Canada's most populous province, and runs in less than 20 schools nationwide. The network's new sister company SRB, however, is well established as a technology provider for Ontario school boards.

SKG Interactive is best known as an Internet company — it also runs an online mall — and some observers expect the firm is most interested in turning YNN into a classroom web service. If so, opposition could shift towards the kind of concerns American parents, students and teachers have been raising since 1997, when the ZapMe! firm began to hand out 50,000 free computers to thousands of schools. The catch? ZapMe! ran web advertisements, collected marketing data

about student interests — and could take back the computers at any time.

Last November, ZapMe! pulled the plug. Blaming pressure from consumer groups, the company killed its web ads and told schools to either lease or lose their equipment.

Whether SKG Interactive will be Canada's ZapMe!, the savior of YNN, or something else entirely is, for now, under wraps. Romanchuk says his company is preparing to make its plans public, but that concern about classroom commercialism is misplaced. "We sell system infrastructure to the boards of education. It has nothing — absolutely nothing — to do with advertising."

— James MacKinnon













relationship with this reality. Some think we can stand outside it, untouched. Both sides are wrong.

New digital portals are leading us into an ever more virtual reality. Some of us think we're in full control of our

# THE GREAT ESCAPE

BY RICHARD DEGRANDPRE    PAINTINGS BY ROBERT JEANRICHARD



**T**here's a spooky, apocalyptic way to talk about virtual culture, and let's get it out in the open right now: We're all just brains in a vat.

The reality, of course, isn't so simple. Your mind doesn't inhabit one world, either "real" or "virtual." Instead, it travels back and forth between these worlds, dragging traces of one into the other, traversing the traces left behind by billions of others. The threat you face isn't a virtual matrix pulled over your eyes or plugged into the back of your head; the threat is a slow contamination from long-term exposure.

In a recent story in the *American Journalism Review*, Chip Brown described how even a few weeks of immersion in an electronic environment can cause that environment to utterly colonize your subconscious. He had been doing intensive research on the Internet, and "woke one night from a peculiar dream, disturbed not by the content but the way the scenes had changed; they had not unfolded in a horizontal flow, the movie-like montage of a typical dream presentation, but had scrolled past, rolling up vertically from bottom to top. And my focus had shifted, too, as if the inner observer were no longer located behind my eyes, but had been projected 24 inches forward, out of my body, a displacement roughly equal to the distance between my desk chair and the computer monitor. The conclusion was inescapable. I had become a mouse. Not even a mouse. A mouse indicator. A cursor."

Our relationship with the burgeoning virtual world is layered and nuanced. We are still human beings, each of us responding to an era of unprecedented change in our unique way. But nothing has quite prepared us for what comes next. Life in the digital world shapes the mind in its own image, such that the moods, rhythms, and pictures of the digital environment are rapidly becoming the dominant moods, rhythms, and pictures of the mental environment. This is the rub of the post-analog age: how we think and feel will go digital long before our brains and bodies do.

French social theorist Jean Baudrillard has called the theft of reality — the tendency of reality to disappear right before our eyes — "the perfect crime." If pulled off successfully, this crime would leave no evidence of itself behind. The reason why is entirely human: the modern, technologized mind does not just accept virtual reality, it comes to prefer it. Our minds are wired to embrace simulated worlds and so, as we build virtual realms ever more real than reality itself, holding on to material reality becomes a near-impossible task.

What elements of your thoughts, feelings, and

desires are real? What elements are virtual? Can you draw lines around the Digital You? If the advancing digital revolution were brought to a halt today, we'd all be caught in an existential limbo, torn between the artificial dreams of simulated reality and the unplugged world in which we try to fulfill them. And if an all-encompassing virtual world were to come into existence tomorrow, it's unlikely we would ever remember the first moment we stepped into it.

## THE ONE AND ONLY REALITY

Imagine you are given a pair of eyeglasses and asked to wear them continuously for several days. Slipping them on, you discover that the lenses distort what you see; all vertical lines, such as the edges of walls or buildings, look somewhat curved. Your world, naturally, seems bent out of shape — a distortion of reality. But what happens next? As the perception psychologist James Gibson discovered in 1933 at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, the mind adapts over time. Eventually, the curved lines come to be seen as straight ones. Just as surprising was Gibson's other finding, that when the glasses are removed, the mind compensates. The curved lines show up again, but arcing in the other direction.

At first glance, this study appears to suggest that the mind filters out distortions and finds its way back to the bedrock of reality: straight lines. What the experiment actually shows is the mind's willingness to ignore immediate reality in favor of another, more important one. Given that our awareness of the world appears to derive from sensory cues, it might seem surprising that, with Gibson's glasses on, your mind actually comes to override the experience of seeing what's on the backs of your eyeballs: curved lines. And this is just the point. Your perception of reality, at any given moment, flows from much more than just direct sensory input; it derives from cumulative experience with the goal of adapting to whatever reality presently counts, whether earthly or synthetic, real or virtual, moral or amoral.

Recently I was watching the 1986 Michael Mann film *Manhunter*. In one unremarkable scene, a man who works as a criminal profiler for the FBI is talking on the phone in an empty room of a victim's home. The sound quality seemed poor — his voice sounded coarse and hollow — and certainly not the quality found in big-budget films today. What I noticed next, though, was that the voice talking on the phone was in fact very











## As the world fades behind a digital curtain, the mind follows

close to what it *should* sound like in a barren room of a house. My own sense of what “real” should sound like had been conditioned, I realized, by the unreality of more recent films, where everything is — and must be — more real than reality itself.

The implication looms large in the digital age: good old-fashioned life doesn’t stand a chance against the hyper-realities perfected by technology. When the process of digital perfection spills over into everyday experience, we begin to see how it contaminates all earthly realms, creating sensory and emotional expectations that cannot easily be met, if at all, in what remains of the social and ecological world. Thus arises the question of where exactly do the great arbiters of the virtual — the world’s media and culture corporations — plan to take reality.

We have our clues, among them the image industry’s “beauty myth.” The digital world has invaded fashion and celebrity, too, of course. Not only can the slightest “imperfections” of the flesh be cleaned up, a whole object of desire can be constructed out of bits and pieces of wholesale humanity. The result is a synthetic supermodel that’s digitally perfected, declared the standard template, and then displayed through the gauntlet of the supermarket checkout.

In the abstract, the claim that virtual worlds reanimate the mind in their own image might seem hyperbolic and playful. In the case of the beauty myth, you see just how “real” it becomes. Young women have millions of exemplars from which to judge the sizes and shapes of the female body, yet this vast pool of reality is somehow overridden by a narrow band of hyper-reality. It’s a perfect match with the finding of Gibson’s classic study. Many young women, presented with their own image, fail to “see” what appears on their retinas. Instead, as researchers have now documented, they often perceive a distorted, “fatter” version of themselves. Again, their sense of reality derives from cumulative experience with the goal of adapting to whatever reality appears to be most pressing, or “valuable.” Unfortunately, for many women, this “valued” reality happens to make them sick.

We’ve come to think of the real and virtual as separate worlds, or at best overlapping ones. In fact,

they are deeply intermingled through feedback loops such as the one played out by the beauty myth. These loops create a *dialectic of diminishing returns* — a dialectic that’s gradually transforming us into virtual beings, propelling us with growing speed into the Great Escape.

### DIGITALLY MASTERED

There’s no reason why you should believe that what looks, feels, or sounds like the real thing is anything more than a synthetic construct that, through its ubiquity and privileged status in our flickering society, has forced its way on to the stage of reality. Despite centuries of philosophical effort to prove otherwise, the mind seems more intent on making sense of the world, whatever world that might be, than it does in holding on to some primordial reality that’s no longer visible. Unfolding in three steps, this process of re-animation begins as soon as your mind becomes conditioned by virtual worlds more urgently alluring or satisfying than your own.

#### (ADAPTATION)

The mind isn’t some kind of computer that remains unchanged as cultural software runs through its cerebral circuits. Conscious reality changes as the software of everyday life changes, and remains changed thereafter. Whether it’s watching the tube, surfing the web, or viewing the latest special-effects flick, chronic exposure to simulated ideas, moods, and images conditions your sensibilities, albeit to different degrees, for how the real world should look, how fast it should go, and how you should feel when living in it. When a thousand points of light shine upon you in a commercial war for your thoughts, feelings, and wants, your mind adapts, accepts, and then, to feel stimulated, needs more. Kids twenty-five years ago forfeited their quarters to a video game called Pong. Pong is to Sony PlayStation 2 what a firecracker is to the atomic bomb. *Virtual reality wires us for a virtual world.*

#### (HABITUATION)

As you adapt to the latest digital experiences, straying farther and farther from your home world of the here and now, that home world becomes less satisfying each time you return to it. Simply, the virtual becomes the only reality that counts. While technology has always transformed consciousness



by transforming experience, the digital age promises to go further in rewiring your mind, erasing every evidence of a boundary between reality and virtuality. This is not unlike the phenomenon of the "phantom limb," where a person loses an arm or leg but continues to feel its presence. As natural extensions of ourselves, our sense of an arm or leg is represented not in the limb itself but in the neural circuits of the brain. Adaptation to hyper-reality works in essentially the same way. The technologies that mediate and simulate everyday experience acquire a level of neural organization that makes them a natural extension of yourself. They alter your basic sense of reality, eventually causing you to feel incomplete without their continued presence. You become haunted not by a phantom limb but by a phantom reality. *Once we're wired for a virtual world, the present world goes dim.*

#### (EVACUATION)

Finally, as the world fades behind a digital curtain, the mind follows. The unmediated world no longer satisfies our digitized needs and wants, thus making virtual worlds even more desired destinations. It may be hard to believe people want to live a totally virtual existence today, but as more people fall out of touch with the old-fashioned world, virtual worlds will begin to appear — and be sold to us — as virtual heavens. *Wired for virtual reality, everyday reality becomes less satisfying, propelling us with greater momentum toward life in virtual worlds.*

It's the Great Escape.

### WHEN REALITY SUCKS

This is no academic theory. You can see people taking the Great Escape into hyper-reality within practically every realm of human activity. Here, the discontented husband who, to escape his unplugged relationship at home, goes online in search of new ones. There, the harried parent who, to keep the child suspended at a comfortable distance, plugs him in to the video console. A recent British TV ad tells all: the overworked father hails the virtues of Internet shopping for his wife, the television and the cordless phone for his adolescent daughter, and video games for his kids. With everyone wired, not a single social interaction need take place, and the father can finally get some rest.

The social alienation of the digital is already enough to convince some to resist — to log off, drop

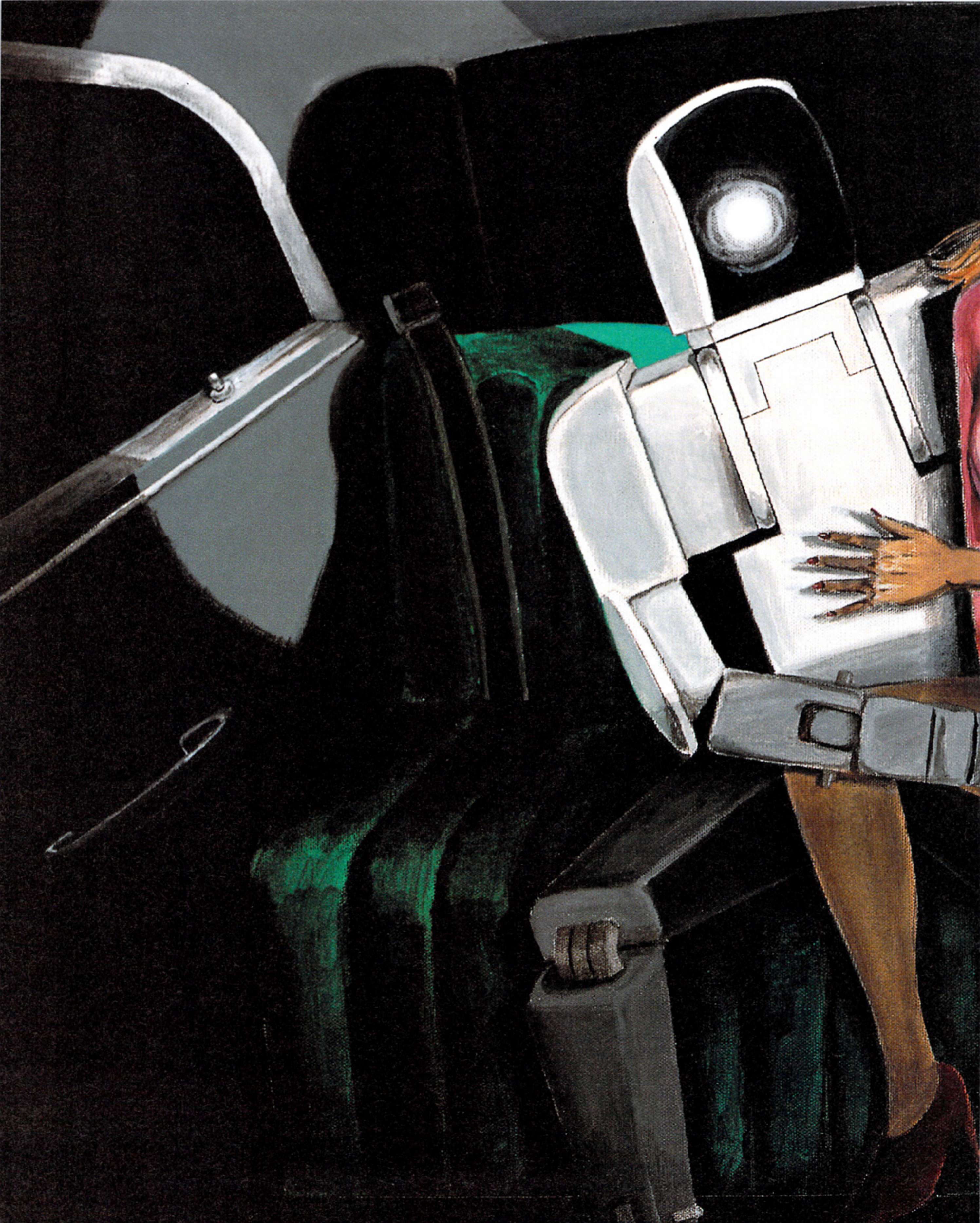
out, and live outside the virtual zone. Even such info-age "back-to-the-landers," though, will have trouble avoiding the digital wake. As more people come to spend more time inhabiting ever-more virtual worlds, their actions will feed back into the reality that we all share. In fact, we already know that civic groups and public spaces are disappearing en masse, with the digital dreamworld of tomorrow costing us the whole damn neighborhood today.

There is perhaps no clearer case of this than that of the alienated teen who slips away from reality through the cyberspace portal located in his or her bedroom. As in the oft-cited example of the Columbine High students, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, the individuals escaping from reality shift their time and energy to a digital reality that speaks to and cultivates their disaffection. As the Columbine example illustrates, the escapist lure of the virtual serves best when it reinforces the escapees' sense of boredom, isolation, and alienation, thereby antagonizing rather than promoting a productive stance, however radical or revolutionary, in the world outside their bedroom doors. (Further evidence: the *New York Times* reports that the Internet offers access to more than 2,000 groups promoting white-supremacist or anti-Semitic views, and the number is growing.)

In place of strong social structures supporting a balance between social inclusiveness and selfish exclusiveness, we now have technological structures that support an accelerating feedback loop in favor of hyper-exclusiveness. This applies as well to childhood. Not surprisingly, studies show children to be rapidly abandoning the complex social and active world of outdoor play, choosing instead the more passive and isolated world of plugged-in play. Here the dialectic of diminishing returns takes center stage.

Consider Sony's new PlayStation 2. While the first PlayStation handled per second about 360,000 polygons (the building blocks that produce real-time 3-D graphics), PlayStation 2 can run between 20 and 100 million a second. The chip that anchors the new PlayStation is said to move data at about 48 gigabytes a second, compared to the 1.6 or so gigabytes of data handled per second by the latest Pentium processor. Also, the graphic synthesizer necessary for the display of these graphics renders up to 60 frames and 75 million pixels a second — far more than other state-of-the-art, 128-bit game consoles (e.g., the Sega Dreamcast renders only about five million pixels a second). The PlayStation 2 thus offers a 50- to 100-fold











increase in processing power in a single upgrade in video technology.

Given the power of this plugged-in alternative to the imagination and vigor of outdoor play, the question arises as to whether this latest game technology will, as *Newsweek* predicts, “supercharge interactive entertainment” and “catapult a thriving game-console industry into another galaxy.” The law of diminishing returns suggests not. Once a brief honeymoon period is over, the “wow” power of each new generation of technology returns to essentially the same level as for the last generation. In other words, PlayStation 2 is next year’s Pong.

But if we naturally adapt to the drama, realism, and rhythm offered by the latest in media technology, how can it be that virtual worlds are becoming increasingly attractive havens in which to make the Great Escape? As the dialectic of diminishing returns makes clear, there is no contradiction. When the virtual domain becomes more interactive, realistic, dramatic, and accelerated, you accommodate those changes. They become the new standard of what’s needed to meet your newly-inflated sensory and emotional expectations. Meanwhile, the relative meaning of the unplugged world fades.

The point isn’t that the graphics are more lifelike than ever before, but that they *have* to be — *and they will always have to continue to be* — if they are to seem anything more than ordinary. Furthermore, it’s not that the latest in virtual reality is experienced as all that dramatic or spellbinding, but that the unplugged world is all the less dramatic and spellbinding as a result. Media technology do not bring great things to life, they simply shift the venue for where one has to go to feel alive.

## PHARMACOLOGICAL AID

With the mind moving back and forth between the virtual realm and the unplugged realm, the self is at home nowhere. The symptoms of this disjoint vary in form and intensity, and also across individual, gender, race, and other lines. They include everything from psychosomatic problems to personality disorders, from behavioral problems to debilitating anxiety and depression. But even if we are not all affected equally, there can be no doubt that for a long time now the ailing self has taken increasing refuge from an alienating world by using both drugs and media as technologies of support. Consider a twist on a

familiar concern: the Prozac revolution.

Prozac has become iconic for our time, representing the overall explosion of psychotropic drug use in recent decades. From 1980 to 1989, the number of prescriptions filled for antidepressants more than doubled in the United States. In 1999, Prozac was the number three selling drug, with more than 76 million prescriptions filled, and today roughly one in ten Americans filter their life experiences through antidepressants.

The overall trend toward expanding psychiatric diagnostic categories, such that they now swallow up huge segments of the American population, is not by itself new. What makes the Prozac revolution an actual revolution is something else, namely the social philosophy that was shrink-wrapped alongside it. As dubbed in Peter Kramer’s best seller, *Listening to Prozac*, this is “cosmetic psychopharmacology.” The idea here is that new “lifestyle drugs” are being synthesized not to make us well, but rather to make us, as Kramer puts it, “better than well.”

This is a profoundly cybernetic ideology: the progressive abandonment of concern over real-world causes of despair and dysfunction in favor of symptom-specific individual “solutions.” The better-than-well ideology marks not scientific progress — several thousand compounds were tested by Eli Lilly before Prozac was stumbled upon — but social regress. It urges you not to think about or pursue social change, but to seek out technological and consumer-based fixes to what are not individual problems.

Of course this cyborg ideology of “more human than human” couples perfectly with the postmodern ethos of the digital age. Both tap in to the same utopian technological spirit; both function as technologies of the self; and both help you accommodate your nervous system to a dying and dysfunctional social realm. As unplugged reality gets worse, the cyborg solution is to constantly upgrade and improve the self. By helping us cope in the middle years of today — living neither as the socioborgs of times past nor as the true cyborgs of times future — drugs like Prozac affirm our cultural direction. They are part and parcel of the Great Escape.

## GOING, GOING, GONE

The Great Escape will take us to a time that has, literally, no place. Will we as a society choose to build this placeless place? No: it will simply evolve step by



step — as it already is — with us adapting along the way. Will you embrace it? Will your children? No: you and they will simply inhabit it as the last in a series of steps in the evacuation of a dying social and ecological world.

Robert Nozick, in his 1974 treatise on moral philosophy, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, asked, "Should you plug into this machine for life?" In the first year of this new millennium, he returned to the question in *Forbes ASAP*, concluding that "In a virtual world, we'll long for reality even more." Nozick, like the rest of us, has remained trapped all these years within a kind of naturalistic romanticism, tacitly assuming that life in the corporeal world will prevail because it's inherently better — *it's real*. "We want not only to experience things a certain way — for instance, our children being happy, our colleagues respecting us — we also want the situation to actually be that way. We don't want our whole life to be an illusion or a delusion, or to be merely virtual." Nozick acknowledges that some of us are now likely to choose to spend our days and nights embracing virtuality, but he argues in turn that "the rest of us are likely to find that choice deeply disturbing." Most people will reject the "experience machine" because they know that the meaning of life cannot be reduced to a philosophy of electronic hedonism. "We refuse to see ourselves as merely buckets to be filled with happy experiences," he writes. It's that familiar reaction again: we are human beings; we will never be brains in a vat.

But such doubts ignore the psychological, cultural, and economic forces that propel the Great Escape forward. If the emerging digital matrix can simulate reality better than reality itself, real and virtual become a meaningless, or at least impossible, distinction. What's more, pleasure's got nothing to do with it. The digital ethos of "log on, jack in, and drop out" does not thrive today because we're seeking a hedonistic paradise. However positive or entertaining the virtual life, the ultimate reason we're apt to be taking flight from material reality is to escape the expanding unpleasantness of our inner and outer lives — a *mélange* of boredom, restlessness, malaise, anxiety, and depression. The virtual life isn't the opium of the masses, it's the anesthesia.

And where does that leave you and the Digital You, me and the Digital Me? Will advances in the cybernetic sciences simply continue to offer up more powerful prosthetics and synthetics, cyborg props to encourage and permit a further abandonment of the social and

With everyone  
in the family wired,  
not a single  
social interaction  
need take place.  
Dad can finally  
get some rest.

ecological world? Is there any escaping the Great Escape? Is it time to go Amish?

There may be no way out. Defense against the digital arts requires an understanding of how we have become both the perps and the victims of the perfect crime — the pawns in a game of diminishing returns. But it also requires much more, having to do with the entrenched cultural logic that encourages this dangerous dialectic between the technological and the psychological. It has been a long journey into the digital age — one passing through the oral, print, photographic, and analog mediums — and the warnings given here are but echoes of warnings past. As this trajectory accelerates in the digital age (and there is no reason to think it won't), we will continue hypergliding down the path into virtuality until we face the specter of total assimilation. The ultimate irony of our attempt to master all of nature, and save our own human nature, could be achieved in the digital near-future, where the only things left are a dead, depleted world, and one all-too-real virtual machine.

*Richard DeGrandpre is a psychologist and independent scholar of drugs and other "technologies of the self." He is the author of Ritalin Nation: Rapid-fire Culture and the Transformation of Human Consciousness (Norton, 1999) and Digitopia: The Look of the New Digital You (Random House, 2001). Parts of this essay were excerpted from the latter, which will appear in March.*











DESIGN: BILL TEXAS 2000 PHOTO: EPG/ALISTAIR BERG





## Rest in Peace Haven't you heard? Anti-globalism protest is done and gone

If you listen you will hear, at first, nothing more than the deep, satisfied breathing of a sleeping giant. The giant is corporate globalization, which started the new millennium in an anxious sweat, worried that the little people were starting to bust its chops. But it was all a bad dream. The WTO is "listening" now, big business is "going green," and the TV cameras have already forgotten those noisy activists. It's eleven o'clock and all's well. Sleep tight, big fella.

It's hard to avoid the comparison to Jonathan Swift's Gulliver, asleep and tied to the ground by a thousand strings pulled tight by the tiny people of Lilliput. By the end of 2000, the mainstream press and globalists had talked themselves into a new consensus: that the anti-corporate movement has had its day (a worthwhile adventure, but thankfully brief). A similar moment passed in activist circles, a fear that the firecracker we'd tossed had reached the deadpoint of its arc. It's increasingly clear, though, that what we actually tossed was a net, with new cords pulled tight with each passing month.

Forces are at work that will, no doubt, catch the mainstream napping again and again. Last year, in May and June alone, an estimated 50 million people participated in general strikes in India, Argentina, Nigeria, South Korea, Uruguay and South

Africa. Five of these named the International Monetary Fund as an explicit opponent. Then there is the emergence of a post-communist left in Europe — and the rise of Europe itself — running up against America on genetically modified foods, on climate change, on unions and, of course, on the fact that a Disneyland in Paris didn't crush that damn French culture for good.

The street protest movement, too, is rebuilding. The video *This Is What Democracy Looks Like*, filmed during the Seattle shutdown of the WTO, is shaking the North American campus. A feedback loop is shaping up. Corporate globalism has become so closed, so exclusive, that many of us have begun to live, in part, outside its rules — conservation biologist David Ehrenfeld calls it "a shadow society." The inventions of that shadow, in turn, have begun to shape the demands of a grassroots global movement. And the structure of that movement — diverse, decentralized, flexible — is helping build ideas for a renewed democracy.

If any endpoint seems like a distant dream, well, that too may work in our favor. Looking over our heads, today's corporate cheerleaders see nothing but a cloudless horizon. They're a perfect match with Gulliver, who wakes up bound and tied. "I heard a confused Noise about me, but in the Posture I lay, could see nothing except the Sky." — *Staff*



# Call the Blue Helmets

United Nations brokers peace deal between corporations, rest of us



UN SECRETARY GENERAL KOFI ANNAN (LEFT) WELCOMES NIKE CEO PHIL KNIGHT INTO THE GLOBAL COMPACT. TOGETHER, THEY SAY, THEY WILL BUILD A BETTER WORLD.

**M**etaphorically, there would be a seedy hotel room, and red neon flickering through the blinds. Dollar bills would be scattered over the floor, tangled in the bedsheets. It's a sordid tale, but all too true: the United Nations, that venerable institution, has crawled into bed with the multinationals.

The UN has decided it can best serve the six billion people it represents by embracing globalization and joining forces with the handful of corporations that set the world's business agenda. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's much-publicized "Global Compact" asks corporations to commit to nine principles of good global citizenship, from the use of eco-technology to respect for the right to unionize. Participating companies should "embrace and enact [these] principles within their sphere of influence."

The Global Compact is not an enforceable set of rules, stresses assistant secretary-general John Ruggie, but rather "an open-ended experiment." Eager lab-rats to date include Nike, Shell, BP Amoco, and the British mining company Rio Tinto.

Corporate Watch, a San Francisco-based watchdog group, has responded with an experiment of its own. In September 2000, they helped found the Alliance for a Corporate-Free UN, a coalition of over 70 civil-society organizations from around the world. Their mission is to pressure the UN to "step back from the slippery slope, and to play the role we think the UN should play — a counterbalance to corporate globalization," says Joshua Karliner, executive director of Corporate Watch.

The Alliance proposes a nine-point Citizens Compact that calls for a legal framework to "govern [corporate] behavior on the world

stage." The Global Compact, they say, is a "bluewash" campaign: a chance for multinationals to improve their public image by wrapping themselves in the flag of the UN. Alliance members point to the inclusion of Shell as a clear violation of one of the the UN's own guidelines: "Business entities that are complicit in human rights abuses . . . are not eligible for partnership." Shell has been accused by activists of complicity in numerous human rights violations against the Ogoni people in Nigeria.

"If the UN increasingly becomes involved with these corporations, it will lose its credibility as a moral authority," says Karliner. "It is legitimizing the corporate vision of globalization rather than the grassroots vision of globalization."

UN officials respond that corporate partnerships simply recognize the new realities of international trade. "The world needs open markets," Ruggie has written. "They are

required to sustain prosperity in the industrialized world and they provide the only hope of pulling billions of poor people in the developing countries out of abject poverty."

But the more pressing issue might be closer to home: the UN has a serious cash-flow problem. In a 1999 speech to the US Chamber of Commerce, Kofi Annan proposed a neat *quid pro quo*: the UN will "continue to make a strong case for free trade and open global markets," and in return, he asks the Chamber to speak out "loud and clear" on the US government's hundreds of millions in unpaid dues.

Metaphorically, they would have rented the motel room that very night. — Eliza Strickland

## RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

... In 1942, sci-fi legend Isaac Asimov laid out his Three Laws of Robotics — rules to govern the fiction that he had created. Today, a soulless entity really does threaten civil society: the corporation. Though they are legal fictions, corporations now wander the globe, their demands sweeping away the rights and freedoms of their human creators. It's time these sci-fi monsters were brought to heel: simply substitute "corporation" for "robot" in Asimov's rules:

- 1) A corporation may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
- 2) A corporation must obey the orders given it by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.
- 3) A corporation must protect its own existence, as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Laws.



# Democracy as Contact Sport

A couple weeks ago, we received an invitation to attend an event at the Library of Congress. Coca-Cola was about to make an “historic contribution” to the Library of Congress, and the library, and Coca-Cola, were inviting reporters to cover the event. We accepted the invitation.

We learned from the morning papers that the “historic contribution” was a complete set of 20,000 television commercials pushing Coca-Cola into the American digestive system. Remember the one where the kid hands Pittsburgh Steeler Mean Joe Greene his bottle of Coke, and in return, Mean Joe tosses the kid his football jersey? Or what about on a hilltop in Italy where the folks start to sing, “I’d like to buy the world a Coke”?

The event was at the Great Hall of the Thomas Jefferson Building — named after the Thomas Jefferson who, in 1816, wrote, “I hope we shall crush in its birth the aristocracy of our monied corporations which dare already to challenge our government to a trial of strength, and bid defiance to the laws our country.” Anyway, we pull up at the appointed hour (7:15 p.m. on November 29, 2000) at the Thomas Jefferson building, and there’s a traffic jam created by stretch limousines blocking the entrance.

In addition to lowly reporters, the 400 or so guests include ambassadors, members of Congress, corporate chieftains and other dignitaries. Good thing we dressed up.

The Great Hall is this absolutely stunning room, with marble staircases. A string quartet is playing. Waiters are serving Coke in classic bottles. The food is fabulous — lamb chops, trout, Peking duck. We rub shoulders with the ambassador from Burma.

The “aristocracy of our monied corporations,” as Jefferson put it, had taken over the place, and Coca-Cola wanted to make sure that everybody knew it. After all, Coke could have just donated the ads to the Library and left it at that. But this wasn’t about Coke’s largesse. It was about public relations — whether the public would view the company as racist (Coke had just agreed to pay \$192.5 million to settle allegations that it routinely discriminated against black employees in pay, promotions and performance evaluations) or a junk food pusher (consuming large quantities of sugared Coca-Cola has led to ours being one of the most overweight generations in history) — or instead, a generous contributor to the Library of Congress.

James Billington, the Librarian of Congress, was called on to deliver good things to Coke, and he did. He turned over the keys to the Great Hall, and Coke decked the place out with its logo, stitched in red beside the logo of the Library of Congress. Television sets were placed throughout the hall, the better for the ambassadors and members of the Democratic Leadership Council to check out the commercials.

Billington was selling the soul of the library to one of the world’s most powerful corporations.

Gary Ruskin, director of Commercial Alert, was outside the

event, protesting. “It is not the proper role of the taxpayer-financed Library of Congress to help promote junk food like Coca-Cola to a nation that is suffering skyrocketing levels

of obesity,” Ruskin said. “It is crass commercialism for James Billington to degrade Jefferson’s library and founding ideals into a huckster’s backdrop.”

But without shame, Billington introduced Doug Daft, the president of Coca-Cola, who said that “Coca-Cola has become an integral part of people’s lives by helping to tell these stories.” Nothing about profits. Nothing about overweight kids. Nothing about racism.

After Daft spoke, the room went dark, and the ads ran on the television screens. Nostalgia swept the room. When the ads were finished, the lights went back on and the crowd cheered. About 80 high school students, dressed in Coca-Cola red sweaters, filled the marble staircases and sang, “I want to buy the world a Coke.” Again, the crowd cheered. Doug Daft, standing downstairs, came back to the microphone to continue his statement. We were upstairs at this point, and we looked down at him and asked, in a loud voice: “Why are you using a public library to promote a junk food product?”

The room went quiet. Library of Congress police charged up the marble staircase. Doug Daft put his hand to his ear and shouted back to us: “What did you say?”

In a louder voice, we shouted back: “Why are you using a public institution to promote a junk food product?”

The next thing we knew, we were on the ground. The Library of Congress police had tackled us. Again, the crowd cheered — not for our question, but for the tackle.

We were dragged downstairs, past the ambassador from Burma, and hauled outside, where police officers from the District of Columbia were waiting for us. Out of the Thomas Jefferson building came running a man from Coke. “This is a private event,” the man from Coke told the police. “I’m from Coca-Cola.”

At first, the police wanted nothing to do with the man from Coke. But the man from Coke insisted. They huddled.

Apparently, the man from Coke didn’t want us arrested for asking an obvious question. Apparently, the man from Coke didn’t want a public trial. The man from Coke was standing up for our First Amendment right to ask his boss a question.

The police said we were to leave the grounds. And we weren’t to come back. Ever.

*Russell Mokhiber is editor of Corporate Crime Reporter. Robert Weissman is editor of Multinational Monitor. They are co-authors of Corporate Predators: The Hunt for MegaProfits and the Attack on Democracy (Common Courage Press, 1999). For more “Focus on the Corporation” columns, see <[www.corporatepredators.org](http://www.corporatepredators.org)>.*

Next thing we knew, the Library of Congress police tackled us. The crowd cheered.





In this recent South African campaign, a Namibian Himba woman's breasts are blown sideways by the "new, more powerful" Landrover Freelander. The image drew the wrath of, among others, the acclaimed photographer David Goldblatt, who demanded the company apologize. "This ad strips this woman of her dignity," he told Landrover's marketing manager Moira Moses. Her reply: "It's not my responsibility."  
— David Robert Lewis

## Radio Free-For-All

Anyone can be a pirate with public access radio

**F**or two weeks, 94.1 FM in the Twin Cities was an elegant sort of chaos: First you'd hear pygmy music, then punk. Or maybe 1930s Nazi propaganda followed by the techno activism of Atari Teenage Riot. Where was it all coming from? The cryptic answer: *anywhere*.

Behind the chaos, though, was order—the American "microradio" movement, responding yet again to the consolidation, automation and syndication that now dominate the nation's radio industry. In other words, pirate radio had struck again.

Low power FM microradio stations have been striving for years to replace those voices lost to commercial broadcasters' reliance on cookie-cutter programming for maximum profit. Setting up a microradio station, though, can be a costly and daunting technical task. So, this past November, 2000 Flushes Pirate Radio of Minneapolis, Minnesota, made getting on air as easy as point-and-click.

Here's how it worked: The station set up a web server and solicited MP3 digital

audio files. Any sound was game, from anyone, anywhere. When someone uploaded a file, custom-coded software fed the recording to a 100-watt transmitter to be broadcast uncensored and unedited—in fact, without any human intervention at all. As the sound collage poured in, a voicemail call-in number was added, allowing anyone to dial-a-rant that would be guaranteed to make the airwaves.

The station packed it in when the Federal Communications Commission came calling (the FCC forbids unlicensed radio), but the crew posted a victorious note on their website, thanking all who participated in the public pirate marathon.

"Far from being the station of the lowest common denominator, 2000 Flushes was an interesting mix of musical tastes and opinions... You proved that the public not only wants good radio, but that the public can and will control the content directly."

A final note: the people who set up the station never said a peep on the air.

— John Anderson



## CORPORATE SPOTLIGHT

Philip Morris, the infamous cigarette and food producer, gave \$60 million to charity in 1999. But you knew that. Because the company spent another \$108 million on ads to tell the world about their generosity.

After a tasteful corporate marriage, the company once known as British Petroleum has a new, New Age name. While clearing major fines and settlements for hazardous waste, clean air, and royalties violations, the company rebranded as "Beyond Petroleum," bringing together such distinctly oily corporations as Amoco, ARCO and Castrol. The new logo is a green and yellow sunburst, faintly reminiscent of the Green Party's sunflower. Rumors that the company considered the alternative name BB—Beyond Belief—could not be confirmed.

Sony Co. (motto: Building tomorrow's problems, today) is working to be a global leader in community relations. According to leaked documents, Sony wants to get in touch with activist groups—through the use of Internet spies. They also intend to help funding agencies with difficult decisions, like pulling the plug on Sony's fiercest opponents. The company's major concern: a push to force high-tech companies to take responsibility for the disposal of their products, which may contain any of some 700 toxic substances.

In December, Nottingham University Business School announced plans to open an International Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility. Initial funding will come from British American Tobacco, "the world's most international tobacco company." One observer couldn't help but state the obvious: "Could you think of anybody more inappropriate or worse or just more ironic to do this with?"

The US government has snapped 180 degrees and endorsed the idea of a global antitrust body—an organization to examine whether multinationals are zapping competition and building a corporate oligarchy. But don't get excited just yet; the US now likes the idea as a way to speed mergers and help businesses avoid country-to-country red tape. Antitrust rules, though, have been used to break corporate power from turn-of-the-century bankers to Microsoft today. That means there's room for another model: vigorous, enforceable, and set to crack down on "dollar democracy."



## Euro-Kid Ad Ban?

Greece has banned toy ads on TV from dawn to dark, and may extend the ban to all products aimed at kids. Poland, Belgium and Ireland will consider doing the same. In the US, a proposed bill would nix “unfair” children’s advertising, especially to toddlers. And the Swedes, outspoken pioneers of kids’ ad prohibition since 1991, will head the European Union for the next six months.

Lousy time to be, say, an ad creative trying to revive the Count Chocula breakfast cereal account. But then, the advertising industry has not yet begun to spin.

The typical argument of ad-ban advocates was developed by Sweden’s Erling Bjurström, a communications professor who argues that children are “trusting” and easily manipulated. According to Bjurström, research shows clearly that children can’t tell the difference between TV programs and advertisements. It’s a con game, with the suckers literally born every minute.

In response, ad execs are selling a line to the public that they’d never tell their clients: that children are not much affected by ads except as a learning experience. Exposing kids to ads, they say, helps them become the savvy consumers they are, freely choosing caffeinated sodas and thrilling to Christmas toy fads.

Expect a year of tough, polarized debate. And the widest degree of separation? Only one side is driven by a \$100 billion profit motive.  
— Staff



Sixteen years after a toxic leak at a Union Carbide plant killed 6,000 people in Bhopal, India, protesters are still marching to demand restitution. To date, the American-owned company has paid just \$3,000 apiece to the families of the dead and \$600 to the injured. And it refuses to disclose the chemical make-up of its lethal gas — a “trade secret” that prevents the disaster’s 120,000 survivors from receiving the best possible treatment.

## COMEUPPANCE: GORDON RITCHIE, THE JUNK-FAX KING

In our ongoing series of tributes to folks who tried to outrun karma, the prize this month goes to the viperine Gordon Ritchie.

Ritchie is director of a London-based company called 21st Century Fax. Its irritating m.o. is double-edged: they plug people’s fax machines with unsolicited ads — touts for fad diets, get-rich-quick schemes and opinion polls — and then dun whoever responds to the ads with steep per-minute phone charges, pocketing most of this revenue as profit. (They tend to keep the faxes coming, even when people ask to be taken off the list.) How lucrative a scheme is this? Well, consider that the company sends eight million faxes a month to Britain and Germany alone.

The opinion-poll questions are intentionally provocative (“Should gay couples be able to adopt kids?”), and timed to exploit hot-button news events. The day after the school shootings in Columbine, the company mass-faxed three million US households the question, “Should there be more effective gun-control laws?” Nearly 40,000 Americans responded (and got a rude shock when their phone bills showed up).

US communications regulators have been swamped with complaints. Unsolicited faxes are illegal under US law. But because his faxes chug in from overseas, Ritchie has been able to escape prosecution — until now. Last month,

federal regulators told Ritchie the company had 30 days to pay a million-dollar fine, or make a convincing case in its own defense.

Our judgment of the judgment: it’s a start. The proper remedy? Find Ritchie’s home address, phone and fax numbers,\* make them public, and encourage people to disturb him day and night. The most callous of mental-environmental polluters only get the message when the sewage starts backing up in their own basements. — Bruce Grierson

\* Specs on Ritchie? Email  
<dominique@adbusters.org>



## THE CARBON SINK

To a politician faced with the unpleasant task of cutting carbon dioxide emissions, there is nothing as lovely as a tree. Or rather, a carbon sink.

Just imagine — people can go on spewing carbon from their tailpipes and power plants. We'll just sop it up by growing more trees! Which are, after all, made of carbon. That's why North American diplomats negotiating the Kyoto treaty on climate change have been demanding that they be given "credit" for the fact that lots of trees grow on this continent. That fact, they argue, should exempt us from having to raise gas prices or otherwise inconvenience ourselves in the effort to slow global warming. And that argument, they found, was enough to collapse the most recent round of talks.

But that's just the politics. The real problems are biological. If carbon is stored underground — in a coal mine, an oil well, or a gas deposit — it's permanently prevented from entering the atmosphere. But once you get it above ground and use it, then any storage site, even a tree, is only

temporary. Cut down the tree or burn it in a forest fire, and much of the carbon stored in its trunk, branches, roots, and surrounding soil is going to enter the atmosphere.

And here's the real kicker. As the earth warms this century — three or four degrees Celsius by most guesses — forests will change their very nature. Sometime around 2050, temperate woodlands will stop soaking up carbon and start spewing it out. It's basic biology: hotter temperatures speed decay as soil microbes accelerate their activity. Forests of trees, like gridlocked Ford Explorers in urban America, will become net producers of carbon, contributing to global warming.

Which is not to say forests are a bad idea — for many reasons, including treehouses, bird's nests, and short-term carbon storage, a tree is a damn nice thing. More of them by all means, please. But less gas, less coal, less oil — that's the real need.

—Bill McKibben is the author of *The End of Nature* and *A Year of Living Strenuously*

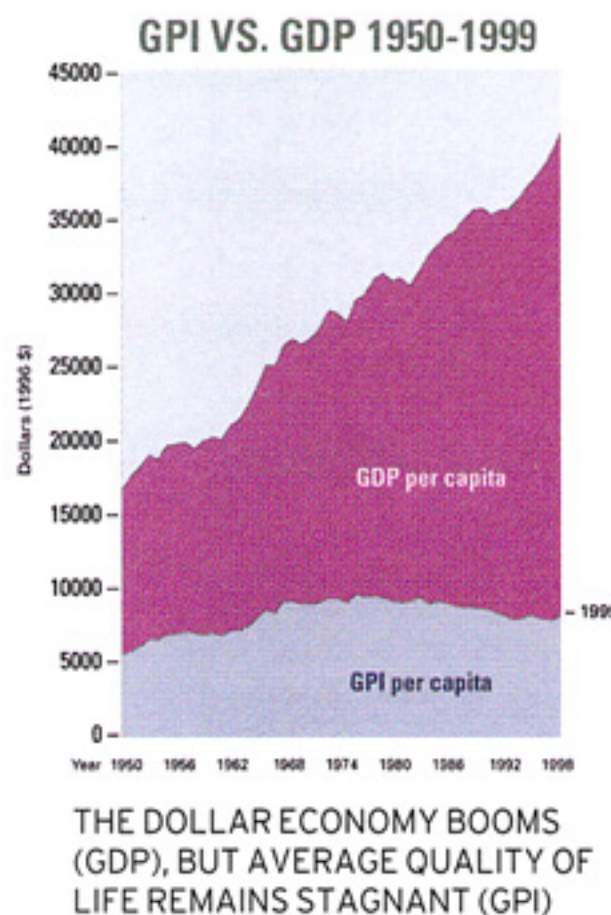
## Real Economics

What's wrong with economics? According to the students at France's prestigious École Normale Supérieure, the discipline is divorced from reality and trapped in a state of "autism."

Last summer the students circulated a petition protesting the over-use of mathematical modeling in their field of study. Focusing on raw numbers over visible human consequences, they say, has created a "veritable schizophrenia" in economic theory.

The debate spawned by the students' petition spread quickly to include the Paris daily *Le Monde*, the country's most illustrious economists, and the Minister of Education. By November 2000, the petition had 800 signatures; top economists are calling for a national conference to open up the argument.

The confrontation with the number-crunchers isn't limited to France. Many of the students are members of the Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens (ATTAC), an international coalition dedicated to taxing speculative trading to benefit social programs. Similarly, groups such as Redefining Progress in the US are promoting economic measures that look beyond the dollars and cents of the Gross Domestic Product. The alternative Genuine Progress Indicator (see graph) accounts for the loss of natural capital and other measurable impacts on quality of life. —Dominique Ritter



## PROFESSION WATCH

More than 200 **ecologists, biologists, and climatologists** have issued the strongest-ever statement on global warming from the field of science. Human influence on the climate is "irrefutable" and the potential consequences "more severe than previously thought," they warn. "We deplore the lack of serious political action to address this issue and we deplore attempts by many large corporations to block meaningful change." Check out <[www.theecologist.org/declarationpage.html](http://www.theecologist.org/declarationpage.html)>

What happens when First World consumer pressures hit people with Third World incomes? Why is it so easy to buy sweatshop goods without feeling guilty? These are the kinds of questions wrestled by the emerging cadre of **consumer sociologists**. Their new *Journal of Consumer Culture* might begin to offer some answers — starting with why their discipline took so long to start looking for them. <[www.sagepub.co.uk](http://www.sagepub.co.uk)>

In one of its most notable contemporary achievements, the field of **political science** has depoliticized itself. When the editors of *Multinational Monitor* magazine searched the approximately 1,000 academic papers presented on the website of the American Political Science Association for the word "corporation," they scored — brace yourself — *two hits*. The word "corporate" yielded only 11 more. The experts, then, agree: corporations are just bit players in the global political arena. So why all the fuss in Seattle, Washington, Prague, Nice...?

Despite stirrings in France (see left) **economists** continue to see no evil, speak no evil, when it comes to the environment. Enjoying the prestige of setting the world's business agenda in a world where business has become the only agenda, economists again kept mum as angry truckers, farmers and drivers took to the streets late last year to demand the right to cheap gas. Corporate price-fixing? Oil subsidies? The future price to be paid for squandering natural capital? Not one of these issues was worth a squeak from a profession that is *very* slow to get it.

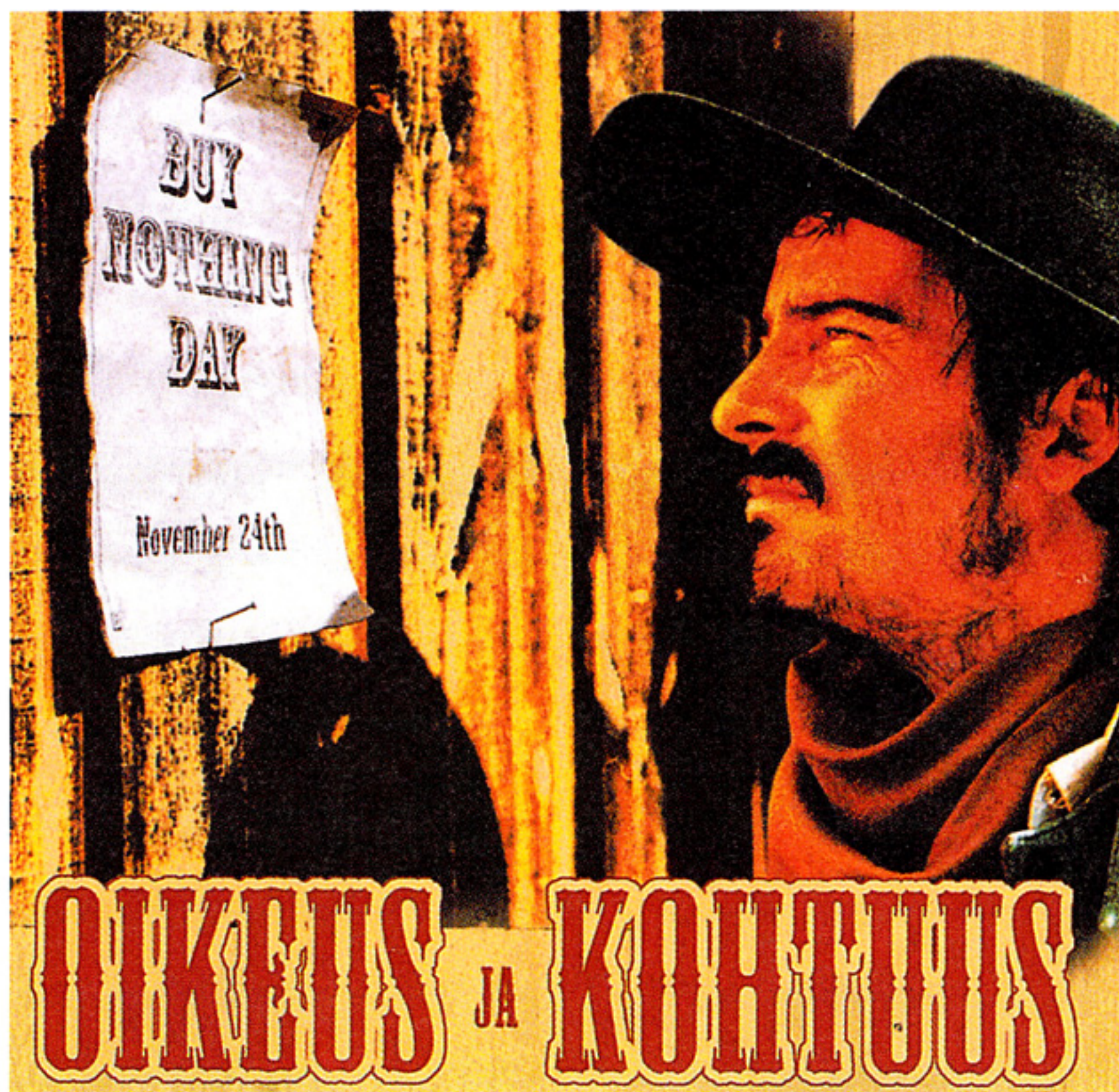


## Café Libre

The cash register sat draped in a cloth, like a fresh corpse. Local musicians played for free. Volunteer baristas floated around handing out drinks. Donated art — about consumer culture, and the commodification of life — hung on the walls, and was eventually given out to the visitors who ebbed and flowed through the Out of the Fog coffee shop in Eugene, Oregon, on Buy Nothing Day. Come four o'clock, Food Not Bombs served warm plates of grub to people lost in equally warm conversation, in an absurdly liberated zone.

From where I sat, the energy was humbling. The notion that we can enter into a common space and not be forced to leave if we don't buy something is a foreign one. What was happening here? Was it hypocritical? A naïve attempt to subvert a larger social problem? Do spin-off efforts like "Steal Something Day" just confuse what Buy Nothing Day is really about? These questions are difficult to answer. But I was pleased to hear people asking them as they sat drinking their coffee, eating their dumpster-dove donuts.

— Hade Anouf



WHEN OUTLAWS RIDE INTO TOWN IN THE FINNISH SHORT FILM *OIKEUS JA KOHTUUS* (JUSTICE AND MODERATION), THEY'RE LOOKING FOR ALL THE SPOILS THAT CRIME CAN BUY. BUT DANG IT ALL, THEY DONE PICKED THE WRONG DAY.

## Ground Zero Mulch ado about Nothing

*Buy Nothing Day is not a passive holiday. It isn't so much about what you don't do — that is, buy stuff — as what creative, non-commercial substitutes you can find for making hamburger out of the earth's resources. Here, one woman from Diamond Harbour, New Zealand, finds the seeds of revolution in her organic garden.*

There's more to organics than just swapping chemicals for a safer means of pest control. A core principle of organic growing is to make the farm or garden self-sustaining.

That means that instead of buying artificial fertilizers, you make your own compost, mulch and (yes) even manure. You cadge the waste from someone else's productive system — the droppings in the fowlhouse or woolshed, the dead seaweed cast up by a storm — and recycle it productively. This way only a few essential ingredients, such as lime, need ever be brought in. My halo glows (and my purse fattens) when I pile up dead leaves for a leaf mould heap, use grass clippings as mulch, or wash plant pots for another go round.

It's worth doing an audit of your gardening practices to see if you're fluent in the three Rs of sustainability. Start with "Reduce." How many things do you buy that you could make or do for yourself? Now add "Re-use." This can be as simple as raising pumpkin

plants in previously used containers. Of course, if your potting containers once held something other than plants — yogurt, say — you're already Recycling. Don't forget that some of the things that come into a garden for free are still valuable, and need to be conserved. Water is the obvious example. Is your garden designed and managed so as not to waste it?

My favorite garden freebies are the self-sown or bird-sown plants. Okay, so lots of them are weeds — but what are weeds but valuable compost that hasn't yet hit the bin? If you know what you're looking for, you'll find, down among those weeds, free flowers and tiny trees. The most charming cottage gardens are sometimes the product of simply giving the plants their head.

I'll never forget touring the organic gardens at the Christchurch Polytechnic Seven Oaks site, and hearing a woman marvel at the beauty of the vegetable patch. Broad green lettuce leaves and feathery carrot tops set off the orange and yellow of marigolds, the red of poppies, the blue of borage and cornflowers. "I wish I could have a garden like that!" she said.

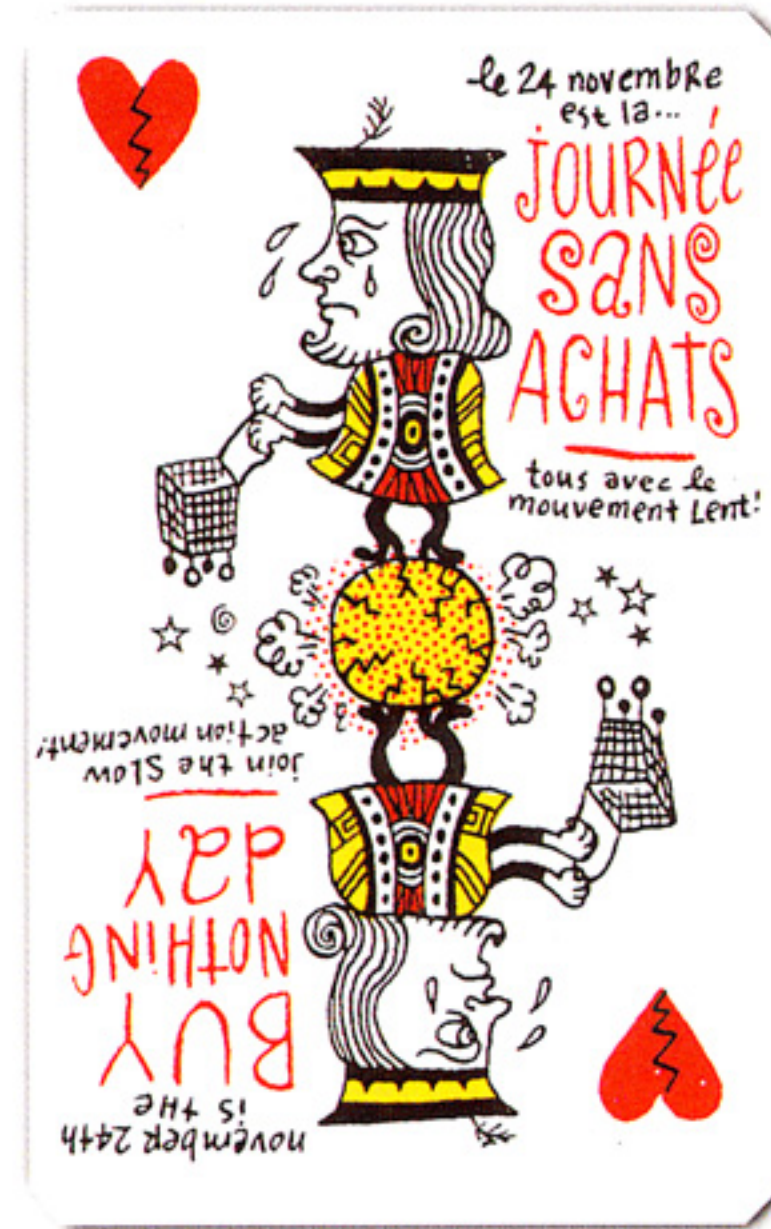
I could have charged her a fee and designed and planted just such a garden for her. Or I could have said "Buy nothing. Let the flowers go to seed."

— Christine Dann



# 25 Ways of Looking At BND2K

Buy Nothing Day continues to kick out the jams, from celebration to confrontation to quiet moments of truth



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: STREET PROTESTER IN MONTREAL, QUEBEC; RACY POSTER; BND ACTIVIST, VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA; FRENCH BND FLYER; SAN FRANCISCO STREET DEMO

## 1. CAIRNS, AUSTRALIA

In the heat of the antipodean summer, activists create an oasis in the commercial desert: a "rest area" for shoppers to drink cold water, let the kids play, and learn about First World consumption.

## 2. VICTORIA, CANADA

Under cover of night, street-chalk brigades plaster the city's sidewalks and malls with subversive messages. The lead target: Eatons, a national chain store celebrating its grand opening on Buy Nothing Day.

## 3. SOMEWHERE IN BELGIUM

Using an old Situationist trick, night-time radicals slip matchsticks into keyholes, blocking locks and temporarily shutting down banks. Meanwhile, saboteurs put several rotating billboards out of commission.

## 4. TOKYO, JAPAN

Mu-Bai-Bi (BND) celebrants in full business suits slip into a consumer playground — a huge, high-priced water park — and leap into the wave pool to hand out laminated literature.

## 5. DUNEDIN, NEW ZEALAND

A 25-foot banner reading, "Buy Nothing Day — Save The Planet" drops in the Meridian Mall at midday; in Philadelphia, USA, activists drop five 11-foot BND banners at Lehigh Valley Mall.

## 6. PANAMA CITY, PANAMA

Organizers launch an outdoor music festival and cash-free barter market of clothes, CDs, books and housewares at the University of Panama, aiming to raise the BND profile despite a disinterested media.

## 7. LONDON, ENGLAND

At Covent Garden, the helmeted "Shopping Police" ticket shoppers, inspiring two red-handed consumers to take up the banner and march around the piazza chanting, "Give your love, not your presents." Says one participant, "Tourists wanted to have photographs taken with us."

## 8. SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, USA

A "triumphantly disruptive" mob raises 12-foot flags reading "Free," "Live," "Steal" and "Play," and reclaims the streets for America's wildest, wandering BND party.

## 9. SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, USA

Supporters of the Boycott the Gap Campaign run a 200-foot-long clothesline through the streets of San Fran — and end up crossing paths with Reclaim the Streets! The line is hung with Gap, Banana Republic, and Old Navy labels — but the pants and tops are painted to spell out messages like "Boycott Gap!" and "Save Redwoods!" More at <www.gapsucks.org>

## 10. TAGAWA, JAPAN

In a humble Kyushu mining town, English teacher Paul Reid holds a BND teach-in.

## 11. CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA, USA

The Internationalist Books and Community Center strips its shelves of all merchandise, covers its magazine stands, and opens for a free swap meet and teach-in. Visitors enjoy the films *Affluenza* and *Escape From Affluenza*, a skill-share on making homemade candles, free food from favorite local restaurants — and a butt-shaking evening freestyle session with three MCs, one DJ, a beat mechanic, a saxophonist and a trombone player.

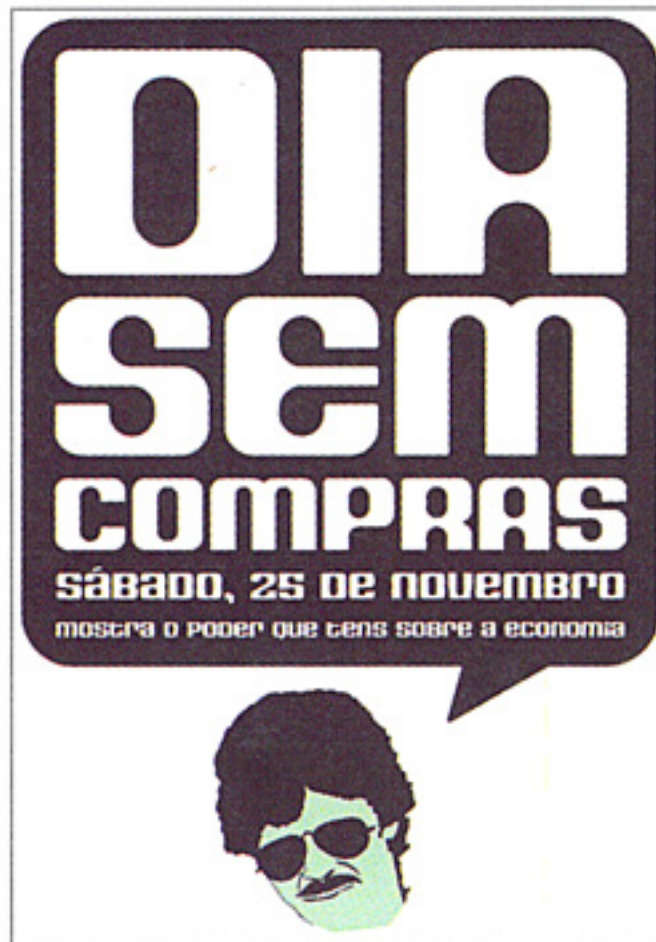
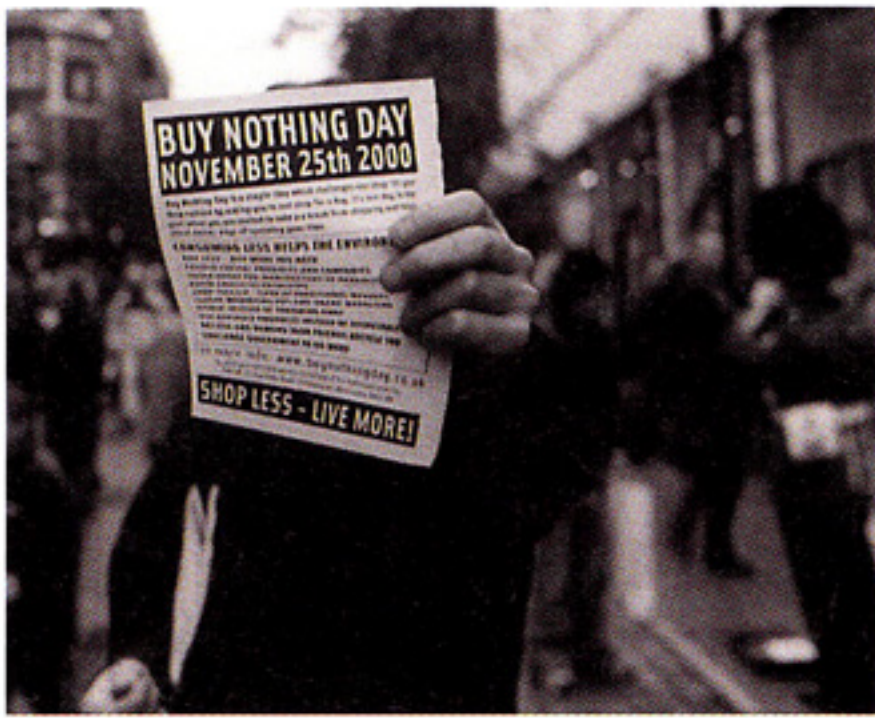
## 12. AKRON, OHIO, USA

Corporate Santa — his suit plastered with logos for Wal-Mart, Kmart, Target, Coke, Toys-R-Us and more — joins a group of friends with a message for shoppers outside Summit Hall mall: "Corporate Santa — For Sale."

## 13. LONDON, ENGLAND

A unique shop — usually open only three days a week — opens its doors for a bonus BND event. The shop is Superswops: where cash and credit are worthless, and products are traded according to emotional value, temporary desirability, history, love, taste and sentiment. "Buying is boring — let's swop! A bag for a top. A pack of nails for a necklace. A home-made porno for a





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: THE SKINNY ON BND; POSTER, SPAIN; TOKYO'S ZEN SANTA; MOVING BILLBOARD IN MONTREAL, QUEBEC; STREET RALLY IN SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA; POSTER, ISRAEL

wedding album. Anything!"  
<www.ampnet.co.uk/superswops>

14. TUCSON, ARIZONA, USA  
Radical cheerleading! "Bloody handprints on those clothes/ They were made by twelve-year olds/ Jump back! Take a look at your life!/ Does your consumption cause strife?/ How do you fight the oppressor man?/ Buy nothing! Take a stand!"

15. BOULDER, COLORADO, USA  
Food co-op director Theo Horesh kicks off a pulsing BND street party by locking himself to the doors of the town's newest corporate chain menace, Borders Books. Authorities manage to remove him two hours later; no charges are laid.

16. LAWRENCE, KANSAS, USA  
Supporters hand out ready-made "gift exemption" vouchers that excuse friends and family from buying you a gift.

17. KYOTO, JAPAN  
Three Zenta Claus meditators and their 20 elf assistants bring shoppers at the Hankyu department store one step closer to enlightenment. "The Zenta meme is spreading!"

18. EUGENE, OREGON, USA  
Building on an idea spearheaded by the Rhode Island Greens, citizens hold a winter coat give-away. They start with 100, collect 200 more from passers-by, give away 150, and turn the extra jackets over to their local missions.

19. SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA  
"Ever increasing retail figures might be regarded well by the economists, but they are not a good sign for society." With these words, Australian Greens representative Ian Cohen moves to adjourn the New South Wales state parliament.

20. DALLAS, TEXAS, USA  
In the North Park Mall, a lighted BND sign drifts aloft on red and white balloons.

21. TAMPERE, FINLAND  
For the second year running, media activists produce a phenomenal BND TV spot, picked up by stations nationwide. This year, a spaghetti western: "We used the Wild West as the metaphor for western capitalism, which does not obey laws and knows no mercy."

22. BOULDER, COLORADO, USA  
Angela Owen shuts down sales at her organic linen and children's store, Boulder By Design, and instead spends the day telling would-be customers about BND. A few doors down, another retailer tells the local *Daily Camera* why she wouldn't do the same: "Americanism is consumerism."

23. UPPSALA, SWEDEN  
Beneath a simple banner, a simple goal: talk to as many people on the street as possible about their consumer culture.

24. VANCOUVER, CANADA  
At *Adbusters* headquarters, BND supporters write in from 50 countries, from Argentina to Venezuela, Finland to Israel, Pakistan to Suriname, Taiwan to Tunisia. Thousands visit the BND site at <adbusters.org>; on Buy Nothing Day, web visits peak at over 17,000.

25. EVERYTOWN, AMERICA  
Two weeks after BND2K, the Gallup polling company releases some interesting numbers: 85 percent of Americans say Christmas is too commercialized; 42 percent would enjoy the holiday more without the gifts; and almost 60 percent say they no longer enjoy Christmas shopping.





1492 200102

I WANT YOU TO CURB

YOUR CONSUMPTION

THANKS!

[WWW.ADBUSTERS.ORG](http://WWW.ADBUSTERS.ORG)





## Hacklash Online culture jammers are being classified as 'terrorists' and chased off the Net

**W**e're radical supporters of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights," says Oxblood Ruffin, citing Article 19, which upholds the freedom "to receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

A member of the New York-based computer hacker group Cult of the Dead Cow <cultdeadcow.com>, Ruffin has been working with a team of international programmers to develop software that will allow Internet users in totalitarian countries like China to circumvent "national firewalls" — government filters that block websites containing political, sexual or religious content. To be released this spring, the Peekabooty application is a person-to-person file-sharing system that is simple enough to be sent by email. Using Peekabooty, web users will be able to visit forbidden websites indirectly, through others who have full access.

"It'll drive a lot of governments insane," says Ruffin. In fact, the United Arab Emirates is worried enough about Peekabooty that it has already banned access to the CDC website.

This kind of socially engaged, technologically advanced "hacktivism" went public in the mid-1990s with the advent of Floodnet, a software used by supporters of the Zapatista peasant revolt in Chiapas, Mexico, to overload the Mexican government website with repeated download requests (now called a "denial-of-service" attack). Today, hacktivism has grown to encompass activities as diverse as online organizing, virtual protests, altering websites to send a political message, and radical Internet media. But as its popularity has grown, so has scrutiny by legislators and security firms. According to Paul Mobbs, webmaster for the UK-based Electrohippies collective, an all-out backlash is in full swing.

In a December communiqué, the group claims that "the British Government is seeking to define a 'virtual corporate free state' . . . where corporations can do business free from public pressure." Responsible for temporarily shutting down the WTO website during the 1999 protests in Seattle, the Electrohippies laid low in 2000 to find ways to react as activists are chased off the Net.

The Electrohippies are developing tools to directly challenge new legislation, including the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, which grants the government new powers to intercept email, forces all UK Internet providers to install a "black box" to intercept data for possible use in law enforcement, and allows police to seek court orders requiring anyone using encryption technology to decrypt their data. A further Terrorism Act would make interfering with "electronic systems" illegal, and defines a terrorist act as one that is both politically, religiously, or ideologically motivated and "designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public or a section of the public." Translation: hacktivists, run for cover.

In the US, where the FBI is hoping to use software called Carnivore to sort all Internet messages, anti-hacktivist measures are taking shape, too. In the winter 2000 issue of the *Harvard Journal on Legislation*, three lawyers published a model statute they nicknamed "www.commercial\_terrorism.com." Citing the ®™ mark website, <rtmark.com>, which pairs culture jammers with like-minded funders, the proposed statute suggests a federal criminal code to punish even indirect commercial critics. Use of the Net to

encourage "corporate terrorism" — "the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce commercial interests" — could result in a prison sentence of up to half the maximum prescribed for the crime solicited.

Still, online activism continues to broaden its reach. Other

## The Electrohippies are developing tools to directly challenge new legislation that has hacktivists running for cover

hacktivist projects currently on the go:

- Electronic Disturbance Theater will soon unveil "Anchors for Witnessing," which will establish a series of wireless Internet "anchors" to allow activists in remote areas to put real-time video on the Net. For example, people in Chiapas — largely off the Internet grid — could send daily netcasts of human rights abuses by government and paramilitary forces. EDT co-founder and long-time Zapatista supporter Ricardo Dominguez explains: "The anchors will be built as small Palm-based units and transmitted via a news server the size of a matchbox."

- Zack Exley, a union organizer dubbed "the garbage man" by the US president for his parody site <GWBush.com>, will launch the Internet Organizing Resource Center, <www.iorc.org>, this spring. The site capitalizes on insights Exley gained through <countercoup.org>, a site that co-ordinated simultaneous, locally organized protests of the US presidential decision in 42 states.

- The Federation of Random Action and toyZtech will release a new version of the Protest Online Chat software they introduced during the September 26, 2000, protests in Prague, Czech Republic. According to the Internet security firm iDefense, the software "is likely to increase the amount and duration of participation by cyber activists" in virtual sit-ins.

- The Electrohippies are exploring activism based on Linux, which allows shared software development online. "We're looking to secure computer resources for community groups in the poorer parts of the UK to get them involved in protesting the exclusion of low-income groups from the government's new online nirvana," says Mobbs. "Linux is a big part of this project in order to get around licensing, maintenance and software problems." (See <www.gn.apc.org/pmhp/ehippies/index.html>)

In some cases, the media seems eager to fuel the backlash. A January 2 article in *The Guardian*, ominously titled "Net Tightens Around the Hacktivists," warns that "it seems inevitable that many of the protesters' tactics will be outlawed." A few days earlier, the paper had declared culture jamming a "fad for the memory." To that, Ricardo Dominguez responds with revolutionary zeal: "Tactical Media is still here and is still growing. It may be *The Guardian* that will disappear and not the culture jammers. We are much more fun to party with, much sexier, and we have a deep heart of care for the world." —Paul Schmelzer





## Midnight Cowboy

Once upon a time, people with nothing nice to say about cigarettes made sure to say nothing at all. Capture the nostalgia of those forgotten days with our new Moreo Cookie. Carefully crafted by ceramic artist Cameron Stewart, the Moreo tastefully recalls the Golden Age of Smoking — and gently reminds that Nabisco and Kraft food products are now owned by Philip Morris tobacco. Children and children-at-heart will find it hard to resist this limited edition collectible. Simply pop the top and — puff! — it's that midnight cowboy, the Marlboro Man. Round 'em up!

Celebrate the end of the Tobacco Age. Order your Moreo 'death cookie' at [www.adbusters.org](http://www.adbusters.org), or call 1-800-663-1243. Proceeds go to the boycott campaign against Nabisco and Kraft. Why buy your food from a tobacco company?

MOREO CERAMIC COOKIE (OREO SIZE, 1.75" DIA.)  
JUST \$49.95 INCLUDES SHIPPING AND HANDLING



## Who's Zooming Who?



**W**hen Trent University students returned to Peterborough, Ontario, this fall, a new corporate presence awaited them on campus. The university's administration had signed a four-year contract with Zoom Media in May — right after the start of summer break — and the billboard huckster had quietly moved in to take over what had been, up until then, ad-free space.

The ads are scattered throughout the campus: in dining halls, hallways and, predominantly, washrooms. (Under the terms of the contract, Zoom has a complete monopoly over advertising at Trent. The university receives a maximum of \$18,000 a year for 162 Zoom ads.) Emma Blackburn, the supervisor of Ontario network members of Zoom Media, believes students enjoy the idea of ads in places like washrooms, and that Zoom ads are "funky, trendy and fun."

Trent students, it turns out, are not down with this kind of funky fun. To prove it, they have vigorously struck back against the unprecedented invasion of their privacy. Many have resorted to retouching Zoom ads. Others have actually ripped "ad boxes" from the wall. The most popular technique seems to be "liberating" ad space. From fellow ad liberators at Concordia University in Montreal, Trent students learned that by using a 1/8-inch diameter, 3-inch-long toggle screw (available at most

hardware stores), you can easily remove a Zoom ad from its box. Via this method, students have been steadily reclaiming public space. Subvertisements such as "Ad-ucation or Education?" and "What do you want your university to see you as — Student or Consumer?" have been replacing ads all over campus.

Zoom is in scramble mode. In November, the university's security force was ordered to patrol washrooms, to protect the Zoom ads. Trent security says "damage to Zoom ads is higher here than any other school in Canada — almost \$8,000 in three months."

The exact size of the jammer resistance is hard to determine, but there's little doubt a significant number of students are getting involved. On November 12th, seven students went from dining hall to dining hall covering Zoom's large "Mega Zoom" ads with black fabric emblazoned with subvertisements. A few days later, a group of jammers, working under the stars, pasted 35 Zoom washroom ads on Trent President Bonnie Patterson's large office windows.

Both sides appear entrenched. "Zoom will never terminate a contract because of vandalism," said Claude Breault, Communications Director for Zoom Media. "This would set a precedent." To help repair its reputation, Zoom (along with NewAd Media, another agency specializing in campus advertising) hired a pollster to put a deftly worded question to students across Canada, and the poll delivered the hoped-for results: 79 percent said they were in favor of on-campus advertising when "part of the revenue is redistributed to the students." For two consecutive weeks, the local Crime Stoppers unit featured Zoom "vandalism" at Trent as the county's "crime of the week" — a sure sign of the company's and the administration's frustration with their experiment.

Judging by the crush of letters to the student newspaper, *Arthur*, some students do see the liberators as vandals. But many think professor Andy Wernick has most clearly framed what's at stake: "Education is undermined, at root, if students (not to mention faculty, administrators and staff) are induced to define themselves from a consumer perspective."

— Darryl Leroux

## ACTIVIST NEWS AND EVENTS

→ The next Big One: On April 15, 2001, Quebec City hosts the Summit of the Americas. Their aim: to extend the multinational agenda from the Canadian arctic to the tip of South America under the banner 'Free Trade Area of the Americas.' But first they'll have to get past thousands of protesters. See [quebec2001.net](http://quebec2001.net) for more info.

→ If you prefer policy talks to reclaiming the streets, get thee to Porto Alegre, Brazil, from January 25-30. There, the World Social Forum will discuss economic alternatives to the dominant model of corporate globalization. Check out [forumsocialmundial.org.br](http://forumsocialmundial.org.br).

→ This April 1, join activists world-wide in reclaiming April Fools Day as a festival of creativity against conformity. Organize money throws at stock exchanges and shopping malls! Let anarchy reign! For more info, see pages 48 - 49 or [adbusters.org](http://adbusters.org).

→ April 22 - 28, hundreds of thousands of people will be talking and thinking about a different way to live. Why? What else is there to do on TV Turnoff Week. More info, [adbusters.org](http://adbusters.org).

→ 'Choose Your Own Target' is one theme for May 1, 2001, but others are pushing for a global strike against corporate power. However it plays out, May Day has been reborn as a day to think radical, act local. Watch Australia's [s11.org](http://s11.org) or [indymedia.org](http://indymedia.org) for news.



# A CONFEDERACY OF FOOLS

**T**he pie brigades have come, and their number is legion. Heads of state get slapped with cherry cream; captains of industry go home wearing lemon meringue. The message is always the same: you, fat cat, and you, top banana — with this pie we hereby remind you that you are only human. That's life. So eat it.

It is the eternal message of The Fool, who takes the stage whenever greed, arrogance, authority, pride and sycophancy lay claim to the public headspace. These are the acts of real fools, without which The Fool would be useless and mute.

The Fool is a looking-glass. She is male and female, he is human and animal, they are one moment immersed in the workaday routine and the next overturning the norms of daily life. When we play The Fool, we are The Other, strangers who are in this world but not entirely of it. The ancient term *Narrenfreiheit* means "freedom of the fool." That freedom reminds us that in a moment of ecstasy we can sweep away the illusion of so much of what we endure. The Fool breaks the trail; the revolutionaries follow.

"World-changers need not be joyless and ascetic," writes Harvey Cox, author of *Feast of Fools*. The original Feast of Fools was a medieval tradition, older even than the age of court jesters that

turned their pitiful tricks for those in power. In the Feast, priests would don rude masks, pious citizens would discard and ridicule cherished rituals, underlings would parade in the robes of rulers. Often, the day of festivity would spill over into a week. Authorities constantly condemned the feast, and it faded some 500 years ago.

The tradition, though, has traveled through the underground, nourished by Fools from hundreds of cultures. In the past century, we've seen Dada and the surrealists; the situationist vision of the city-as-funhouse; the beat

poets, Yippie pranksters, punk artists and drag queen parades. And now, once again, The Fool is on the rise, stiltwalking and firebreathing over the heads of corporate culture.

The Feast of Fools was celebrated at the start of each new year. Now we stand at the beginning of a new millennium. What better time to revive The Fool's spirit? Imagine the sweet chaos of a single day dedicated to popping a jack-in-the-box in the face of the global elite. How will society cope with 24 hours of raw weirdness, a rain of pranks and unexpected public dreams?

This April 1, let's return Fools Day to its rightful tradition: tweaking the nose of power and authority. Let's turn the world upside down, and see what falls out of its pockets.



THE BILLBOARD LIBERATION FRONT CIRCA 1990

PHOTO: BILLBOARD LIBERATION FRONT



## REPORT FROM AGENTS SUSHI AND CHERRY PIE: MISSION COMPLETED.

Frank Loy, undersecretary of state for Global Affairs, has tasted a black forest cake to remember. Direct hit landed at Climate Change treaty talks in the Hague last November.

PHOTO: UK INDYMEDIA.ORG





# foolsfest2001



On April 1, party rules apply. Anarchy will be enforced. Abby Hoffman proved, on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, that throwing money at the problem works — when the problem is conformity. Let's do it again. In stock exchanges (and — why not? — malls), let small bills rain down on the heads of the shell-shocked. Fools of the world unite!



1



# recanters

BY BRUCE GRIERSON

2





**W**illiam James, in his classic book *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, describes a typical “conversion.” The subject, emotionally exhausted, suddenly “feels a wave overpoweringly break over (him),” leading to “a sense of perceiving truths not known before.” That’s one definition of an epiphany. But epiphanies can also happen in a secular context. Every day, in almost every field, someone perceives themselves to be on the wrong side of an imaginary divide. The “second brain” in their gut — that ten-billion-nerve knot — tells them their life must change. And, on moral grounds, they jump the gap.

Think of it as a professional U-turn. When a conservative politician, after years of uncomfortable cognitive dissonance, decides she is really a social democrat at heart, and switches parties, we say she has “crossed the floor.” Others in humbler quarters do the same: the ad executive who becomes a media critic; the crown prosecutor who becomes a social worker; the butcher who becomes a vegan. Sometimes it happens in a blink, perhaps sparked by an external event — the collapse of a marriage, the loss of a mentor, a close brush with death — that sharpens the urge to invest what life remains with meaning. But often a reversal is simply the result of a private crisis of conscience. One day you can’t quite meet your own eyes in the mirror. You balk. You confront the choices you have made that have taken you incrementally off course. Then, basically, you defect — blowing up bridges behind you, marching into the arms of grateful new colleagues while the shouts of the furious ex-colleagues fade in your ears.

The conversion experience of Ray Anderson, CEO of the world’s largest commercial flooring manufacturer, was worthy of the Biblical Paul. It happened in August of 1994, as he was sweating to prepare a speech about how his company, Interface, was meeting environmental expectations. Anderson had, he admits, “no clue what to say beyond, ‘We obey the law.’” Serendipitously, Paul Hawken’s book *The Ecology of Commerce* had just landed on his desk. Maybe there was something in there he could crib. He dipped in.

“It was as if a burning spear had been plunged through my chest,” Anderson says. In Hawken’s story of the

reindeer of St. Matthew Island — its metaphor of what happens when a species exceeds its carrying capacity — Anderson saw the future. He realized just how badly his company had been screwing up. He wept. And when he stood before the task-force of his own employees, he opened with the truth. “Our products are petroleum-intensive, and in our 25 years of business, we’ve done more harm to the environment than I care to think about.” He pledged radical change. And, indeed, since that day, Interface has been as green as a Seuss egg. The company’s aim, and motto, is “Zero Waste,” and Anderson has authored a memoir called *Mid-Course Correction*.

That same phrase could easily apply to Michael Allen Fox. A philosophy professor at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario, Fox used to be the guy journalists called on to rebut the arguments of radical animal-rightists. By Fox’s lights, it was okay to eat meat and wear leather. Within reasonable bounds, experimenting on animals was ethically defensible. (On this subject, Fox wrote the book: *The Case for Animal Experimentation: An Evolutionary and Ethical Perspective*.) Animals are not, he insisted, our equals and thus should not have “equal rights.”

But Fox recanted the day he confronted a philosophical conundrum: what if extraterrestrials landed on Earth tomorrow? They showed all the signs of “personhood”: high intelligence, self-awareness, the capacity for complex speech. They had everything going for them that we did, and more — yet they were not human. Would we still have the right to enslave and kill and eat them? He decided we wouldn’t. And that conclusion forced him to retreat on his position on animals, some of which have all these traits. He stopped eating meat. He wrote another book, *Deep Vegetarianism*. He publicly reversed his previous position in a number of scientific journals — making him an instant hero within the animal-rights movement and the scourge of many in the medical profession who once considered him a level-headed ally.

The true moral U-turn is not to be confused with the sudden, late-in-life beneficence of an entertainment mogul or diamond magnate; you can give a billion dollars to the United Nations, or endow a lucrative scholarship fund in your name, without demonstrably changing your



politics, values or lifestyle. The motive is what matters. This is not about trying to buy a happy legacy, about cleaning up your act to clean up your image (or because your spouse leaned on you). To qualify as a real turn, the decision has to come from within, uncoerced.

The philosopher Sam Keen describes the felt shift that precedes the U-turn as the freeing of a stifled, internal voice, "a voice that seems to come out of the depths of your past or future that says: 'You are betraying your promise, your uniqueness, your gifts. The life you are living is not your own.'"

Bruce Myers knows that feeling. A young Canadian broadcaster covering the Quebec National Assembly and Parliament Hill, Myers was a rising star with limitless journalistic potential when he decided, a little over a year ago, to quit and enter the Anglican priesthood. "Part of my journey was slowly realizing that all of this stuff that was going on around me, which seemed so crucially important and which everyone was taking so seriously, were trivialities," Myers says. "It occurred to me, maybe my purpose is more than reporting the most recent tempest in a teapot, or reading the morning headlines between the latest hits from Britney Spears or The Moffats."

There's nothing to say U-turns can't happen in the other direction. In fact, the environmental movement alone has seen so many Rockfordesque reversals, the asphalt beneath it bears permanent donut marks. (Earth First! co-founder Dave Foreman has come to denounce radical action; Greenpeace co-founder Patrick Moore works for a pro-clearcutting group; and former Sierra Club director Ron Arnold has become the environmental movement's worst nightmare — see sidebar.) But for the most part, left-to-right turns tend to be slower, over the course of a lifetime: that familiar, decades-long softening of the hard ideologies of youth. The moral epiphany happens, necessarily, in a flash. "It's not something you can conjure up on your own, I don't believe," says Ray Anderson of Interface. "It just happens." And its power is such that it compels immediate action.

That's the response the Princeton philosopher Peter Singer tries to provoke in the ethical challenges he issues from time to time. In a recent *New York Times Magazine*

piece\*, Singer cooks up a hypothetical man named Bob. Bob is a car nut; his prize possession is a vintage Bugati roadster. One day, while out walking, Bob sees a train bearing down on a toddler who has wandered on to the tracks. Bob can save the child by throwing a switch and diverting the train onto a siding. But parked on that siding is . . . his beloved Bugati. If he throws the switch and saves the child, his car will be crushed. The kid or the car: which to choose? Nobody with any heart or soul would fail to save the child, Singer has us acknowledge. But wait: aren't all us First Worlders, in effect, in the same position as Bob? We know there are kids, in Africa and India, in the path of the speeding train of starvation or disease. With only a few dollars — a tiny fraction of our disposable income — we could save them. Singer provides the toll-free numbers for UNICEF and OXFAM.

"Now you, too, have the information you need to save a child's life," he writes. "How should you judge yourself if you don't do it?"

Whether you find Singer's approach inspiring or manipulative, it does, pretty effectively, push buttons most of us would rather not have pushed. It forces us to step back and look at ourselves and consider our choices objectively. The process is almost like engineering a moment of reckoning: if you suddenly see things Singer's way, you're obliged to rethink the way you live.

Reversing ground is certainly academically unfashionable; it's seen as the mark of an intellectual lightweight, or at best a moral relativist. But changing is our prerogative as human beings. If it's done for the right reasons, a U-turn may be the only sane response to a complex world that is itself morphing under our feet. Psychologist Robert Jay Lifton, author of *The Protean Self* calls the willingness to radically change a source of strength and value that ought to be embraced, not scorned. There's no denying it takes courage. It's as if you're standing in the docket before a court of everyone you've ever known. You raise your hand and say: I cannot stand by what I believed yesterday, I cannot guarantee what I'll believe tomorrow. But today, this is my considered position.

\* See "The Singer Solution to World Poverty" (*New York Times Magazine*, September 5, 1999)



**Oskar Schindler**

Until 1942, the German industrialist showed no

signs of being any more more than a wealthy, fast-talking drunk with friends in high places. When war broke out in Nazi Germany, he profited, using his connections to acquire a munitions factory in Krakow, which he stocked with cheap Jewish labor. But something happened to Schindler to change him. Some say it was witnessing a German raid on a Jewish ghetto, during which the prisoners were packed into trains to certain death. Schindler became a turncoat humanitarian, sparing the lives of thousands of Jews whose names he put on his now-famous list. We'll never know why Schindler made the turn: in his lifetime, he never explained it.

**Malcolm Muggeridge** The professional cynic — editor of Britain's *Punch* magazine — went from lecherous womanizer and critic of the church to one of the 20th century's great apologists for the Christian faith. What happened? During a near-drowning during a night swim in the ocean, he finally spotted the lights of shore, and read it as a metaphor. (Or, as an alternative conversion-story goes, he entered a church on his way to Kiev and discovered an outlet for his rage against Stalin's genocide.)

**William Kunstler** We think of him as a flamboyant, radical, civil rights lawyer, defending social outcasts of all stripes (and pissing off Right and Left alike by taking on clients like John Gotti and the World Trade



Center bomber). But don't forget Kunstler was once a sleepy suburban tax lawyer in New York, raking the lawn on weekends, "bored out of my skull." It was one week in Mississippi in 1961 that turned him around. He'd popped down to lend a hand in the defense of hundreds of blacks who were moldering in prison on outrageous charges. He stayed for months. By the time of the trial of the Chicago 7, he realized he "had found my place in the world."

**Lee Butler** If nuclear war had erupted around 1990, Butler, the US Air Force general and commander-in-chief of the US Strategic Air Command, is the man to whom President George Bush Sr. would have issued a command to launch American missiles. But Butler is no longer a hawk. After what he calls "a long and arduous intellectual journey," he is now a rabid peacenik, devoted to "putting the nuclear genie back in the bottle." In 1999, Butler founded The Second Chance Foundation, dedicated to global nuclear abolition.

**Jeffrey "The Insider" Wigand** The chemist and a former top executive of Brown & Williamson tobacco company became one of the most famous whistleblowers of our time. Unable to live with the burning guilt of don't-ask-don't-tell, he went public with internal documents on how Big Tobacco systematically buried knowledge of the evidence of their product's deadly effects. Now Wigand takes his anti-tobacco crusade from school to school. If not the sexiest man alive (like the actor who played him in the movie), Wigand may be the happiest.



## Recanter's Row

**Clifford Stoll** The California astronomer became a hero in the cyber-community after he brought down a German spy ring that was using the computers at his Berkeley lab to hack into the US Defense Department in the late-'80s. But Stoll poleaxed his fans when, tired of the hyperbole of the digital age, he wrote the book *Silicon Snake Oil: Second Thoughts on the Information Highway*, which paints the Net as a vast time sink, and life on-line as corrosive to the soul. Stoll thinks Americans' blind faith in technology is misguided: "Computer networks isolate us from one another and cheapen the meaning of actual experience." (Stoll has now further entrenched his position with a follow-up book, *High-Tech Heretic*.)

**Jeff Giuliani a.k.a. "Ronald McDonald"** Mr. Giuliani worked for many years as the firehall-red-headed Mickey Dee's mascot, and he traveled around cementing children's allegiance to heavily salted meat on a white bun. One day, his conscience caved under the weight. Now he is a strict vegan, and misses no opportunity to trumpet the new cause and condemn the old one.

**Jan Wong** A kind of double-recanter. The life story of the prominent Canadian journalist, the "long march from Mao to now," is a wild ideological ride — from comfortable Western girl, to committed Chinese leftist (digging ditches in the cultural revolution and turning people in), and back. She now takes celebrities to lunch.

**Ron Arnold** "We're out to destroy the environmental movement!" Strange

words from a former Sierra Club activist — which explains Arnold's rep as just about the most famous turncoat in the annals of environmentalism. Arnold co-founded the anti-preservationist "Wise Use" movement, widely seen as a front for transnationals and the political right.

Why the switch? By his own telling, the epiphanic moment came during a 1970 meeting of the Sierra Club's northwest chapter in which Sierra Club officers were planning a campaign against a timber company "that they knew was based on a falsehood"; the arrogance and deceit and weird science became too much to bear. The club's president at the time, however, remembers events slightly differently. Arnold became frustrated and left because "we didn't buy a slide show he was trying to sell."

**Gloria Steinem** Most women, unlike most men, get more radical as they age, says Gloria Steinem. That's why the feminist pioneer's recent, decidedly unradical, turn threw her constituency for a loop. After three decades as poster-gal for the virtues of the independent life — marriage, she insisted, was akin to "forced mating in captivity" — Steinem announced that she herself was getting hitched. To a man. (In fact, the fellow who first imported skateboards to England.) Heresy! Inconsistency! Or simply humble sensibility? Steinem justified the turn with a line for the ages: "Feminism is about the ability to choose what's right at each time in our lives."





# CREATIVE RESISTANCE WINNERS

RESISTANCE KNOWS NO LIMITS, OBSERVES NO BORDERS, AND, SOMETIMES, CANNOT CALCULATE THE PRICE OF POSTAGE. THIS MUCH WE LEARNED FROM THE CRUSH OF ENTRIES TO CREATIVE RESISTANCE 2000, BY FAR OUR MOST POPULAR CONTEST EVER. YOU SENT DRAWINGS, SLIDES, STORYBOARDS, VIDEOS — EVEN A MOLOTOV COCKTAIL. WE WERE TOUCHED. AND FRANKLY, TORN. THE JURY ALMOST CAME TO BLOWS ONCE OR TWICE BEFORE SETTLING ON THE WINNERS YOU SEE ON THESE PAGES. LA LUCHA CONTINUA!



how high will you climb?

•



how far will you go?

...

## 1ST PLACE

HUMAN CONSUMPTION  
CONSORTIUM: "KNOW WHEN  
TO SAY WHEN" *series of six posters*  
Scot Hampton · Portland, Oregon

"Often corporations are on the receiving end of the blame for the proliferation of vapid and worthless products. Yet, I often feel that we are missing something. That something is that we, the consumers, are just as much responsible for contributing to this endemic exploration of frivolity."

CHECK OUT THE "FIRST THINGS FIRST 2000" DESIGN MANIFESTO AT [WWW.ADBUSTERS.ORG](http://WWW.ADBUSTERS.ORG)





how long will you continue?



know when to say when.

Profit potential doesn't warrant the depletion of natural resources or mean that the development of a new product is justified. Uphold your organization's commitment to the global community by encouraging responsible product development.

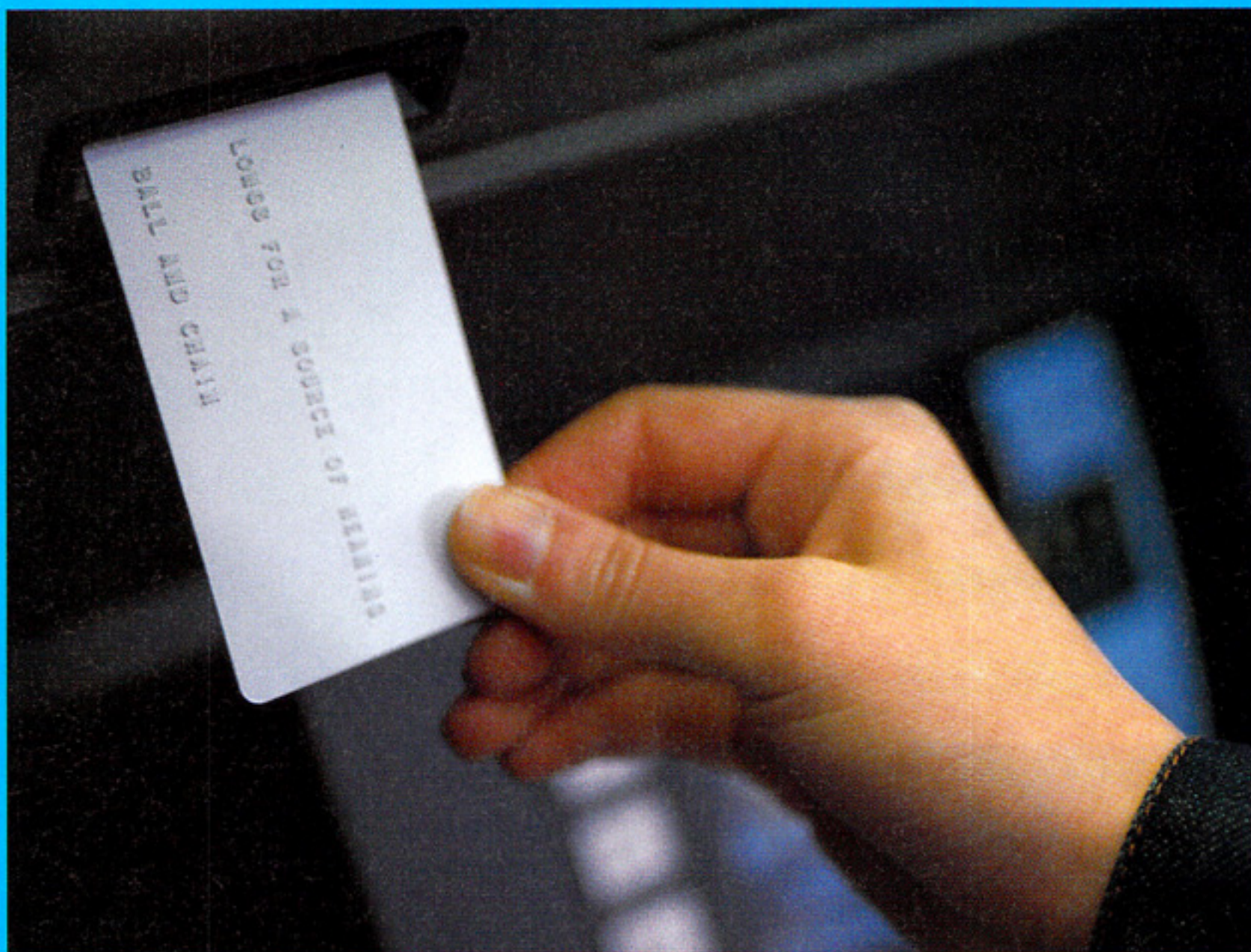
Evaluate before you innovate.  
Contemplate before you create.

Is that too much to ask?



Human Consumption Consortium





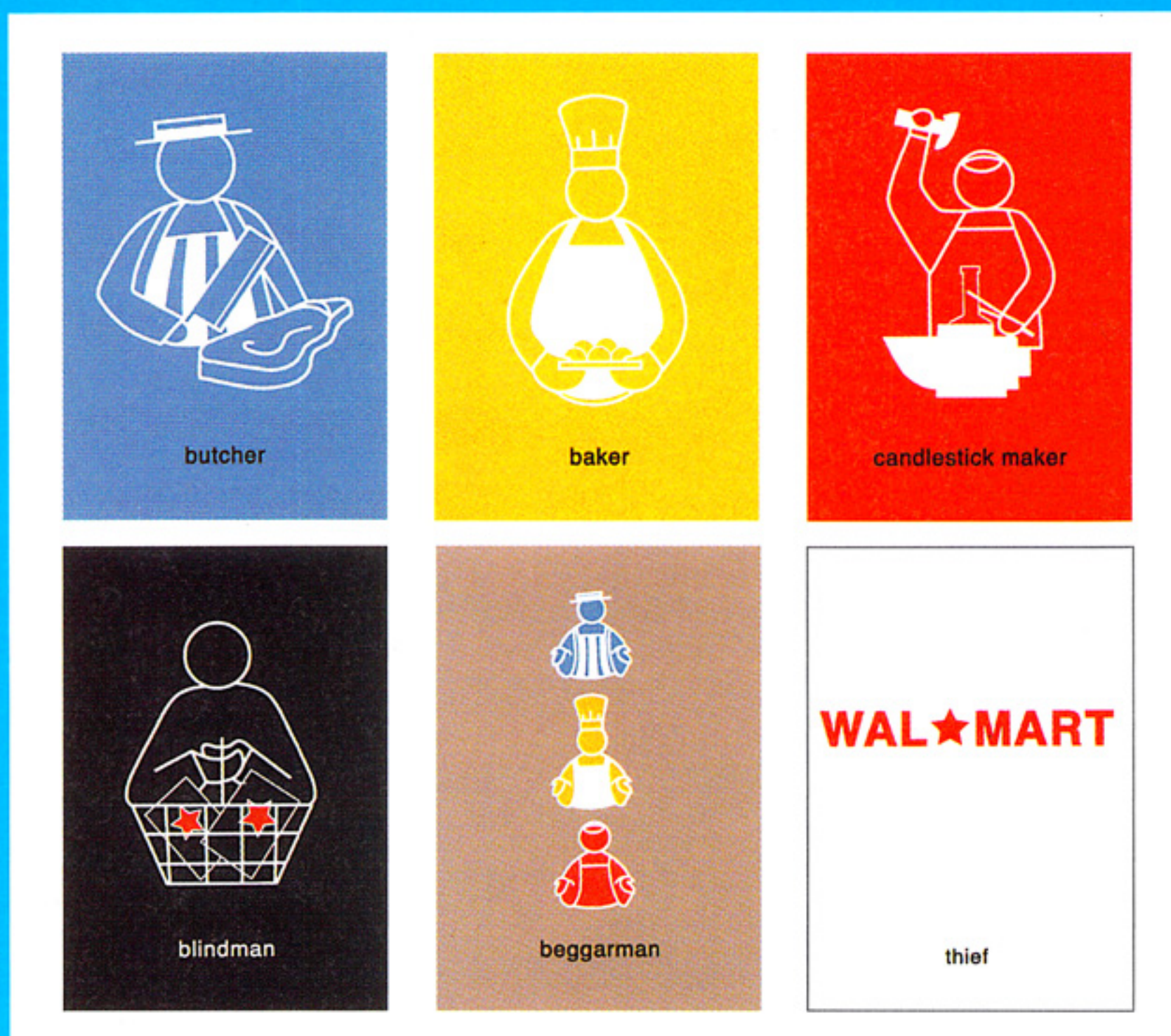
## 2ND PLACE

**BALL AND CHAIN** *fake credit card series*  
Genny Pontifex · Beckenham, England  
"I slip these cards into people's wallets or sometimes leave them on the street. I have even been known to buy cheap wallets, put a couple of cards in, and leave them in public places looking like lost wallets. I swear, this is the last medium in intimate 'advertising.'"

PHOTO: PATRICK HEMINGWAY

## 4TH PLACE

**WAL-MART** *series of six posters*  
Tina Smale · Almeley, England  
"I used the rhyme 'butcher, baker, candlestickmaker, blindman, beggarman, thief' to illustrate the effect Wal-Mart's arrival will have on small, local businesses."







### 3RD PLACE

*ESCAPE* one of many "readvertisement" stickers and posters

Marc de Jong · Melbourne, Australia

"Readvertising involves remixing advertising logos to create a new understanding of the consumer's environment and position within that environment."



### 5TH PLACE

*SUPERSIZE* series of two posters

Joshua Berger · Portland, Oregon

"Through cultural imperialism, America exports gun violence to the rest of the world. Our more pernicious and deadly export, however, is our fast food. The corporations that create markets for fast food within cultures that previously relied on sustainable and healthy sources of nutrition shoot straight to the heart."





DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF

# The Sabbath Revolt

If it's a free market, why does it cost so much?

When I was a kid, we lived in a relatively modest neighborhood and shared one barbecue pit at the end of the block. Every weekend, anyone could go down there and make some hotdogs. Parents would even cook for one another's kids. When we got a bit wealthier, we moved out to the suburbs. There, each family had its own barbecue in the backyard. Instead of barbecuing with the neighbors, we competed with them. "The Jones's have sirloin, so we better get filet mignon!"

Sure, in the suburban sprawl schema, the Weber Grill company gets to sell a whole lot more barbecues, but our experience of community is surrendered to the needs of the marketplace.

I've been making this argument for the past couple of years in articles and speeches around the US. Then, just last month, a libertarian magazine made a fascinating critique of my work that they believed neutralized such anti-corporate sentiments: those of us taking a stand against the marketplace as the dominant social paradigm are only doing so in order to make money!

That's right — the whole 'lefty' thing is a disingenuous scam to sell books, posters, and magazines like this one. We're actually in it for the profit.

What makes this argument particularly perplexing is that, if it were true, shouldn't the libertarians praise us? We would be adhering, after all, to the very principles they espouse! We are simply providing a product that meets consumer demand, and — because we don't really believe the rhetoric we spew — we are doing so without prejudice or forethought. We are as blameless as corporations selflessly catering to the will of the all-powerful consumer. Just like global conglomerates, we — the merchants of Marx — are simply appealing to a target market. In our case, we sell a hip, anti-consumerist aesthetic to people who fall into the Seattle Demonstrator psychographic.

This kind of circular, self-perpetuating analysis is symptomatic of a society getting itself into some serious ideological

trouble. We are so inundated by the free market's rhetorical whitewash that we are fast approaching what can only be labeled "market fascism": a social contract that can no longer tolerate any opinion or event that doesn't serve the speculative economy. Its adherents can't understand motivation in any other terms than profit-mindedness; they can't imagine alternatives to the logic of capitalism. Those who can conceive of counter-currents become the latest-variety "enemy of the state." The state itself, of course, is to be reduced to the barest regulation required for the free flow of capital and protection of property. Market opponents must be eliminated or, better, assimilated. The bottom line really does become the bottom line.

Currently, trillions of dollars and man-hours are being spent to lock down just such a reality template. Through intimidation, reward, and an odd scheme of justifications, the market is yearning towards the status of sacred doctrine. While it's still permitted, let's deconstruct some of its sacred cows before they become our only source of milk.

The first faulty premise of market fascism is that consumption invariably leads to an expression of democratic will — that we vote with our dollars. In this sense, corporations conduct focus groups, polling, and other forms of cultural anthropology, and justify this information gathering as an effort to get to the heart of what people really want.

In reality, the results of such studies are divided into two categories: desires that can be monetized, and those that can't. If focus groups conducted by the music industry, for example, determine that kids want to hear songs made by their own neighbors, record labels do not rush to market songs by anonymous teens. Instead, they use this information to construct publicity campaigns for the groups they have already decided to back.

No, the reduction of the role of citizens to that of consumers does not translate into cash-register democracy. It means that the scope of our influence has been reduced to very limited



conversation with our marketers.

Market fascists dismiss such arguments, claiming that we are paranoid leftists, imagining a conspiracy between a group of fictitious marketers and corporate chiefs — that such people do not really exist. In a sense, they are right. In the corporate reality, no one is in charge.

When you walk into the GAP, a young clerk will initiate a well-researched sales technique called GAPACT (Greet Approach Provide Add-on Close Thank). Should we be mad at her? Of course not. She's just doing what her manager has told her to do. If she doesn't end the day with a certain quota of multiple-item sales, she'll get in trouble. So do we blame her manager? No. He's got to meet a quota, too, set by corporate headquarters. Do we blame the marketing department? Well, they're just taking their orders from the CEO. And he's just taking his from the Board of Directors. And they're just listening to their shareholders. And those shareholders, well, they're some of the same people walking in the door as customers, who happen to have GAP stock in the mutual funds of their retirement plans.

The whole thing is on automatic. Although corporations may have the legal rights of human beings, they aren't human at all. A corporation is just a set of code — like a computer program — a recipe for making money. The human beings enacting the code, from executives to customers to marketers, become part of the machine.

Worse still, today we are empowering our corporations with the most advanced techniques of persuasion known to science. I'm not talking about discredited notions like subliminal advertising, but much more pernicious forms of influence, like neurolinguistic programming, regression and transference, pacing and leading, and other forms of hypnosis. Sure, marketers and advertisers have always used versions of these techniques, but never have we extended and automated them through computers and onto the Internet. The Internet gives the formerly abstract corporate entity its eyes and ears. Consumer feedback is instantaneously recorded, compiled, shared, and acted upon. There is no need for human intervention, or, of course, the conscience or ethical considerations that might slow any of this down. Sell more stuff in less time with higher profit is the only corporate command set.

Like most *Adbusters* readers, I've spent a good deal of time examining how these techniques work. Suffice to say, the way to make people buy things they don't really want is by making them tense. In order to sell unnecessary goods, you must convince people they are unhappy so that they yearn to make their lives better — to fill in that sad vacuum. The plain truth is rarely put this plainly: a marketer's job is to make people unhappy.

And that gets us back to the oldest trick in the book for keeping people in line: take intimacy away from them. If a teenage boy is sitting on the couch next to his girlfriend, he's less likely to be persuaded to buy those jeans in the TV commercial. He's already getting laid! So what are the marketer's alternatives? Get the girl to worry about how her boyfriend's clothes reflect

on her, or, better, find a way to keep the kids from having sex at all.

This all became stridently clear to me a few months ago, when I was asked to appear in a debate on CNN about censorship online. They had me up against a "family values" advocate. I was supposed to argue that the right to free speech outweighed the concerns of parents about what sorts of pornography their kids might stumble upon while surfing the web. As the debate went on, I realized we were all accepting the

We are approaching  
a 'market fascism'  
that cannot tolerate  
any dissent

premise that kids should be protected from sexual imagery. What studies have ever been done to prove it's dangerous for kids to see pictures of people having sex? We let kids watch sitcoms in which parents regularly lie to one another — but we fear what will happen if they see people making love?

My point is not that kids should be exposed to porn. Rather, it is that the sacred truths we hold as self-evident are, in fact, blasphemous distortions of social reality intended to reduce thinking human beings into compliant consumers. This, combined with marketing techniques designed to limit human agency to impulsive Pavlovian responses, leads to an unthinking, unquestioning, and absolutely unfulfilled population, ripe for market fascism.

The irony here is that religion might actually serve as a last line of defense against this branded cultural imperialism. *Adbusters'* annual "Buy Nothing Day" used to occur once a week as a long-forgotten ritual called "Sabbath." Once every seven days, the Judeo-Christian founders concluded a few millennia ago, people should take a break from the cycle of consumption and production.

Imagine trying to practice Sabbath today. What's left to do that doesn't involve paying for admission? Are there any public spaces left other than the mall? Though the Sabbath was widely celebrated even 10 years ago, it now falls outside the imaginable for the market fascists: wouldn't it throw the economy into a recession?

Perhaps, but it would also give us 24 hours each week to restore a bit of autonomy into our own affairs. The hard right has claimed the spiritual high ground (as a way of promoting market values) but it may actually belong to us. It's our way of disengaging from the corporate machine, unplugging from the matrix, and considering whether we would rather have a communal barbecue pit at the end of the block. It's not time off; it's time "on." It's a sacred space for the living. We might even use it to have sex.

*Douglas Rushkoff, Adbusters Editor-at-Large, is the author of, most recently, Coercion: Why We Listen to What "They" Say.*







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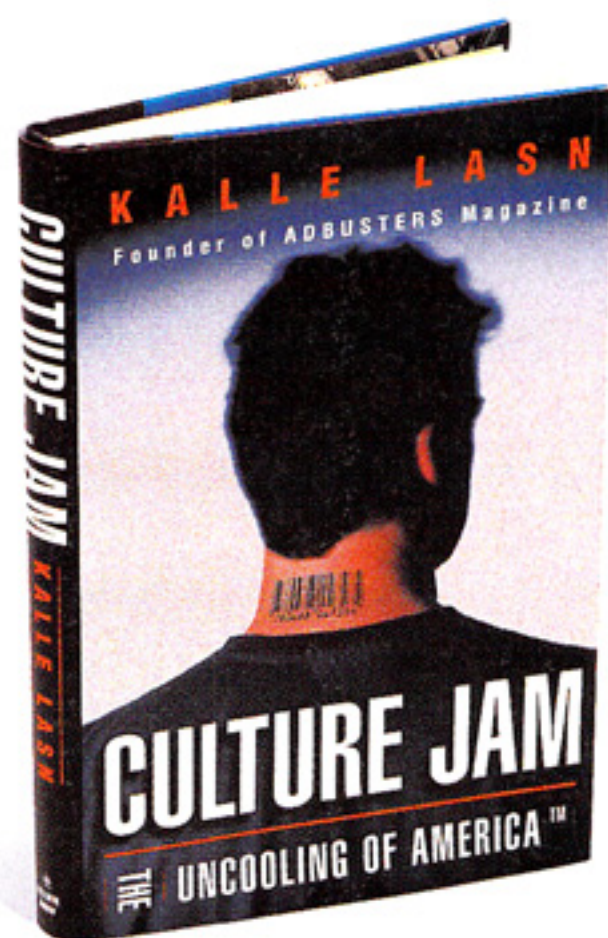
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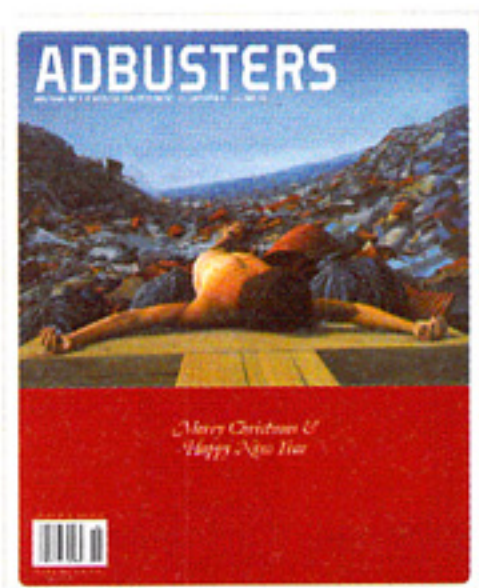
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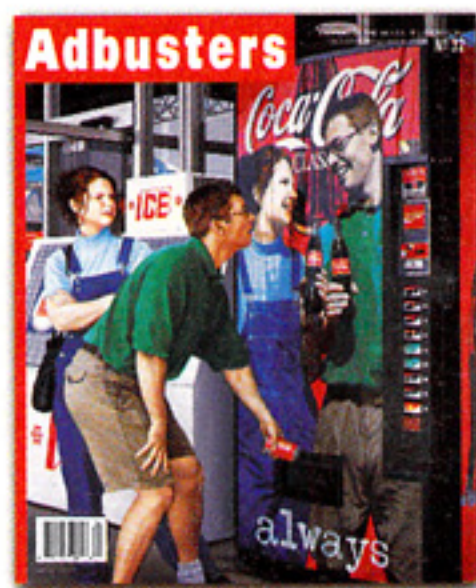
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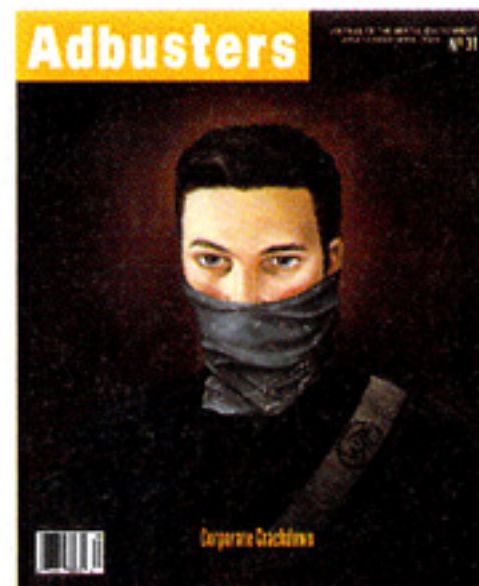
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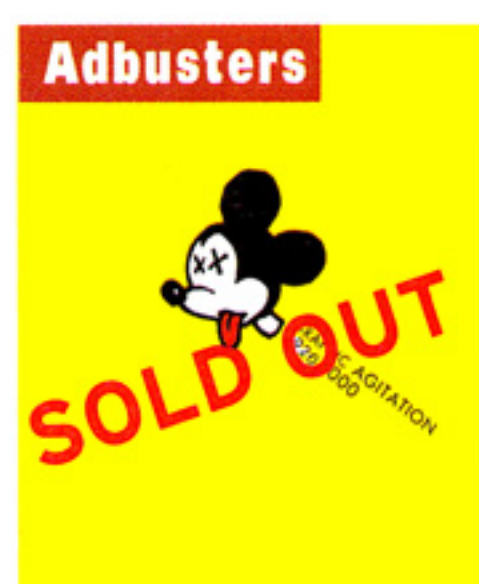
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